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(54) **LOUDSPEAKER SYSTEM**

(57) A loudspeaker system capable of simultaneously providing listeners with a listening environment not giving them a feeling of strangeness. The loudspeaker system (100) comprises drive motors (111 to 113, 121 to 123) for so driving at least first R-channel loudspeaker (101) that the current first listening position is substantially included in the perpendicularly bisecting plane of a line joining the intersecting point of the first R-channel speaker (101) and its directivity axis and the intersecting

point of the second R-channel loudspeaker (120) and its directivity axis and so driving at least fourth L-channel loudspeaker (104) that the current second listening point is substantially included in the perpendicularly bisecting plane of the line joining the intersecting point of a third L-channel loudspeaker (103) and its directivity axis and the intersecting point of a fourth L-channel loudspeaker (104) and its directivity axis. The loudspeaker system (100) further comprises their motor driver section (130).

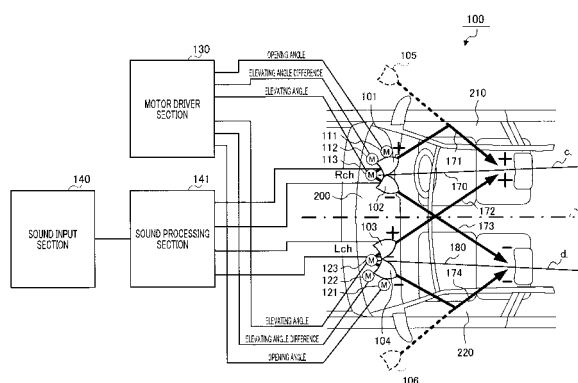


FIG. 1

Description

Technical Field

5 **[0001]** The present invention relates to a speaker system that includes a pair of speaker units each including at least two speakers.

Background Art

10 **[0002]** A conventional speaker system includes, for example, an L channel speaker unit, an R channel speaker unit and a center speaker unit (for example, see Patent Document 1). Each of the above three speaker units is arranged in the center of positions ahead of the driver's seat and passenger seat of a vehicle. The L channel speaker unit is directed toward a direction in which the directivity axis of the L channel speaker unit is rotated counter clock wise in the horizontal direction with respect to the traveling direction of the vehicle and in which the directivity axis is inclined at a predetermined angle to the vertical direction with respect to the traveling direction of the vehicle. The R channel speaker unit is directed toward a direction in which the directivity axis of the R channel speaker unit is rotated clockwise in the horizontal direction with respect to the traveling direction of the vehicle and in which the directivity axis is inclined at a predetermined angle in the vertical direction with respect to the traveling direction of the vehicle. The center speaker unit outputs an -L-R signal obtained by adding an -L signal which is a reverse phase signal of an L channel signal and an -R signal which is a reverse phase signal of the R channel signal.

Patent Document 1: Japanese Patent Application Laid-Open No.2004-289341

Disclosure of Invention

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Problems to be Solved by the Invention

30 **[0003]** With such a conventional speaker system mounted in a vehicle, given that a difference (path length difference) is caused between the lengths of the paths for the L and R channel signals through which the Both signals reaches the listener in the driver' s seat, a phase difference and delay are caused between the both channel signals before they reach the listener. The same applies to the listener in the front passenger seat. There is a problem that listeners feel a sense of discomfort listening to audio due to the above phase difference and delay.

[0004] In view of the above, it is therefore an object of the present invention to provide a speaker system that makes it possible to provide a listening environment which does not give a sense of discomfort to a plurality of listeners.

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Means for Solving the Problem

40 **[0005]** In order to achieve the above object, the speaker system according to the present invention comprises: a first speaker unit including a first speaker outputting a sound to be heard in a first listening position and a second speaker outputting a sound to be heard in a second listening position; a second speaker unit including a third speaker outputting a sound to be heard in the first listening position and a fourth speaker outputting a sound to be heard in the second listening position; and a driving section configured to drive at least the first speaker such that the current first listening position is substantially included in a vertical bisector plane of a line connecting an intersection of the first speaker and a directivity axis of the first speaker and an intersection of the second speaker and a directivity axis of the second speaker, and to drive at least the fourth speaker such that the current second listening position is substantially included in a perpendicular bisector plane of a line connecting an intersection of the third speaker and a directivity axis of the third speaker and an intersection of the fourth speaker and a directivity axis of the fourth speaker.

Advantageous Effect of the Invention

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[0006] In the above speaker system, at least the first speaker and the fourth speaker are driven as described above. Consequently, sounds without a phase difference and delay are more easily provided to the listeners at the first listening position and the second listening position. In this way, according to the present invention, it is possible to provide a speaker system that is able to provide to a plurality of listeners at the same time a listening environment which does not give a sense of discomfort.

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Brief Description of Drawings

[0007]

5 FIG.1 is a diagram illustrating from above the interior of a vehicle mounting a speaker system according to Embodiment 1 of the present invention;
 FIG.2 is a diagram illustrating the overall configuration of the speaker system according to above Embodiment 1;
 FIG.3 is a plan view illustrating positions of the listener and the speaker unit of the speaker system according to above Embodiment 1;
 10 FIG.4 is a schematic view illustrating the relationship between the position of the listener and the direction of the speaker unit of the speaker system according to above Embodiment 1;
 FIG.5 is a schematic view illustrating the relationship between the positions of the speaker unit and the listener in case that the position of the listener of the speaker system according to above Embodiment 1 changes back and forth;
 FIG.6 is a schematic view illustrating the relationship between the positions of the speaker unit and the listener in case that the position of the listener of the speaker system according to above Embodiment 1 changes right and left;
 15 FIG.7 illustrates the directivity axis of the speaker in case that the position of the listener of the speaker system according to above Embodiment 1 changes up and down;
 FIG.8 is a perspective view of the relationship between the positions of the speaker unit and the listener in case that the position of the listener of the speaker system according to above Embodiment 1 changes right and left;
 20 FIG.9 is a schematic view illustrating operations of speakers and speaker units of the speaker system according to above Embodiment 1;
 FIG.10 is a diagram illustrating a table of control content of "rotation," "opening angle" and "angle of elevation" corresponding to a change in the position of the listener of the speaker system according to above Embodiment 1;
 FIG.11 is a diagram illustrating a null plane formed on a plane at equal distances from two sound sources of the speaker system according to above Embodiment 1;
 25 FIG.12 is a diagram illustrating a null plane formed on a plane at equal distances from two sound sources of the speaker system according to above Embodiment 1;
 FIG.13 is a diagram illustrating a null plane of speakers in a state where there is no difference as to angle of elevation in the speaker system according to above Embodiment 1;
 30 FIG.14 is a diagram illustrating a null plane of speakers in a state where there is a difference of angle of elevation in the speaker system according to above Embodiment 1;
 FIG.15 is a diagram illustrating correction of the path length due to the phase difference in the speaker system according to above Embodiment 1;
 FIG. 16 is a schematic view illustrating an adjusting method of applying the speaker system according to above Embodiment 1;
 35 FIG.17 is a diagram illustrating a table of control content of the differences between angles of elevations in the position of the listener (the position of the head) of the speaker system according to above Embodiment 1;
 FIG.18 is a flowchart illustrating automatic adjustment processing of the speaker system according to above Embodiment 1;
 40 FIG.19 is a diagram illustrating from above the interior of a vehicle mounting the speaker system according to Embodiment 2 of the present invention;
 FIG.20 is a diagram illustrating the overall configuration of the speaker system according to above Embodiment 2; and
 FIG.21 is a flowchart illustrating automatic adjustment processing of the speaker system according to above Embodiment 2.

Best Mode for Carrying Out the Invention

[0008] Embodiments of the present invention will be described in detail below with reference to the drawings.

(Embodiment 1)

[0009] FIG.1 is a schematic view illustrating a speaker system **100** according to Embodiment 1 of the present invention and the interior of a vehicle mounting the speaker system **100** from above. FIG.2 is a block diagram illustrating the speaker system **100** shown in FIG.1 and peripheral components of the speaker system **100**.

[0010] In FIG.1 and FIG.2, the speaker system **100** comprises a first R channel speaker **101**, a second R channel speaker **102**, a third L channel speaker **103** and a fourth L channel speaker **104**, each of the speakers **101** to **104** outputting sound of the middle and high frequency range (about 200 Hz to 20 kHz).

[0011] The first R channel speaker **101** is arranged virtually in front of the driver's seat of the vehicle (for example,

in/on a dashboard **200**) in an initial state and outputs sound based on the in-phase signal of the R channel signal (hereinafter referred to as "in-phase signal (R)") from the sound source.

[0012] Further, the second R channel speaker **102** is arranged in an initial state in a position in plane symmetry with the first R channel speaker **101** with respect to the first virtual plane and is arranged virtually in front of the driver's seat, and outputs sound based on the reverse phase signal (hereinafter "reverse phase signal (R)") having a reverse phase with respect to the above in-phase signal (R).

[0013] Furthermore, the above first virtual plane will be referred to as the "first reference plane **c**" in the following description. With the present embodiment, this first reference plane **c** is parallel or virtually parallel to the longitudinal intermedian plane **e** of the vehicle, includes the listening position (hereinafter referred to as "the first listening position") for the listener sitting in the driver's seat and passes the middle point of the first and second R channel speakers **101** and **102**. Further, as illustrated with the present embodiment, the first listening position is determined in advance around the head of the listener sitting in the driver's seat.

[0014] Furthermore, the third L channel speaker **103** is arranged virtually in front of the front passenger seat next to the driver's seat (for example, in/on the dashboard **200**) in an initial state, and outputs sound based on the in-phase signal of the L channel signal (hereinafter referred to as "in-phase signal (L)") from the same sound source as above.

[0015] The fourth L channel speaker **104** is arranged in an initial state in a position in plane symmetry with the third L channel speaker **103** with respect to the second virtual plane and is arranged virtually in front of the front passenger seat, and outputs sound based on the reverse phase signal (hereinafter referred to as "reverse phase signal (L)") having a reverse phase with respect to the above in-phase signal (L).

[0016] The above second virtual plane will be referred to as "second reference plane **d**" in the following description. With the present embodiment, this second reference plane **d** is parallel or virtually parallel to the longitudinal intermedian plane **e** of the vehicle, includes the listening position for the listener sitting in the front passenger seat (hereinafter referred to as "the second listening position") and passes the middle point of the third and fourth L channel speakers **103** and **104**. Further, as illustrated with the present embodiment, the second listening position is determined in advance around the head of the listener sitting in the front passenger seat.

[0017] As described above, the first R channel speaker **101** outputs sound based on the in-phase signal (R) and the second R channel speaker **102** outputs sound based on the reverse phase signal (R). Consequently, on and near the first reference plane **c**, sound based on the in-phase signal (R) and sound based on the reverse signal (R) cancel each other and the listener sitting in the driver's seat feels like sound does not come from the front. A plane in which sound based on the in-phase signal and sound based on the reverse phase signal of the in-phase signal cancel each other, will be referred to as a "null plane." This null plane will be described later referring to FIG. 11 to FIG.14. In FIG.1, the first reference plane **c** is a null plane in which sound based on the in-phase signal (R) and sound based on the reverse phase signal (R) cancel each other. In the null plane, the listener feels like speakers installed virtually in front of the listener do not exist in hearing and the sound comes from the right and left speakers (one is a virtual image). Given that the same phenomenon occurs in the third L channel speaker **103** and fourth L channel speaker **104**, the listener sitting in the front passenger seat feels like sound does not come from the front of the listener. In FIG.1, the second reference plane **d** is a null plane in which sound based on the in-phase signal (L) and sound based on the reverse phase signal (L) cancel each other.

[0018] A pair of the first R channel speaker **101** and the second R channel speaker **102** composes a speaker unit **SP1** of the driver's seat side, and a pair of the third L channel speaker **103** and the fourth L channel speaker **104** composes a speaker unit **SP2** of the front passenger seat side. In this way, the speaker units **SP1** and **SP2** are arranged in the driver's seat side and in the front passenger seat side of the dashboard **200**, respectively. Further, the first R channel speaker **101** and the third L channel speaker **103** compose speakers for the listener (driver) in the driver's seat, and the second R channel speaker **102** and the fourth L channel speaker **104** compose speakers for the listener in the front passenger seat.

[0019] Further, in the first R channel speaker **101**, a driving motor **111** for changing the angle (hereinafter referred to as the "opening angle") with respect to the first reference plane **c** and a driving motor **112** for changing at least the difference of the angle (hereinafter referred to as the "difference of angle of elevation") of the directivity axis of the first R channel speaker **101** in the perpendicular direction with respect to the directivity axis of the second R channel speaker **102**, are installed. In the speaker unit **SP1**, a driving motor **113** that, while maintaining the difference of angle of elevation between the directivity axis of the first R channel speaker **101** and the directivity axis of the second R channel speaker **102**, changes both the direction of the directivity axis of the first R channel speaker **101** and the direction of the directivity axis of the second R channel speaker **102** with respect to the plane where the speaker unit **SP1** is installed. In this way, in the speaker unit **SP1**, the driving motor **111** for changing the opening angle and the driving motor **112** for changing the above difference of angle of elevation are installed only in the first R channel speaker **101**, and, in the second R channel speaker **102**, driving motors for changing these opening angle and difference of angle of elevation are not installed. Further, the angle of elevation of the overall speaker unit **SP1** can be changed by the driving motor **113**.

[0020] Similarly, in the fourth L channel speaker **104**, a driving motor **121** for changing the angle (i.e. opening angle)

with respect to the second reference plane d and a driving motor **122** for changing at least the difference of the angle (i.e. difference of angle of elevation) of the directivity axis of the fourth L channel speaker **104** in the perpendicular direction with respect to the directivity axis of the third L channel speaker **103**, are installed. In the speaker unit **SP2**, a driving motor **123** is installed in order to changes, while maintaining the difference of angle of elevation between the directivity axis of the fourth L channel speaker **104** and the directivity axis of the third L channel speaker **103**, the directions of the directivity axis of the fourth L channel speaker **104** and the directivity axis of the third L channel speaker **103** with respect to the plane where the speaker unit **SP2** is arranged. In this way, in the speaker unit **SP2**, the driving motor **121** for changing the opening angle and the driving motor **122** for changing the difference of angle of elevation are installed only in the fourth L channel speaker **104**, and, in the third L channel speaker **103**, driving motors for changing these opening angle and difference of angle of elevation are not installed. Further, the angle of elevation of the overall speaker unit **SP2** can be changed by the driving motor **123**. The above driving motors **111** to **113** and **121** to **123** are composed of, for example, stepping motors and enable precise control.

[0021] The opening angle, the difference of angle of elevation and the angle of elevation as mentioned above will be described later referring to FIG.9 to FIG.14 and FIG.16.

[0022] Further, in FIG.1 and FIG.2, the speaker system **100** comprises a motor driver section **130** that drives the driving motors **111** and **121** for changing the opening angles, the driving motors **112** and **122** for changing the differences of angles of elevations and the driving motors **113** and **123** for changing the angles of elevations of speaker units **SP1** and **SP2**; and a sound processing section **141** that carries out signal processing of a 2-channel (i.e. L channel and R channel) signal from a sound input section **140**, to which the sound source composed of the 2-channel signal is inputted, and generates the in-phase signal (R), the reverse phase signal (R), the in-phase signal (L) and the reverse phase signal (L) as mentioned above.

[0023] The in-phase signal (R), the reverse phase signal (R), the in-phase signal (L) and the reverse phase signal (L) that are generated by sound processing section **141**, are outputted to the first R channel speaker **101**, the second R channel speaker **102**, the third L channel speaker **103** and the fourth L channel speaker **104**, respectively.

[0024] The sound input section **140** is an input terminal that receives as input a sound source from audio devices such as CD players, DVD players, MD players, cassette decks, radios, television receivers and semiconductor memory audio devices or speech input apparatuses such as microphones. Further, the sound input section **140** may be an audio device or speech input apparatus itself.

[0025] Further, a sound processing section **141** includes delay units (not shown) and can produce phase differences (i.e. delay) between the outputs of the first R channel speaker **101** and the second R channel speaker **102** or between the outputs of the third L channel speaker **103** and the fourth L channel speaker **104** by the delay units. It is possible to adjust a shift in sounds due to the difference between the right and left paths by adjusting the phase difference (i.e. delay).

[0026] In FIG.2, in the speaker system **100** in the vehicle, a controlling section **150** that controls, for example, the opening angle depending on the listening positions of a plurality of listeners and a position detecting section **160** that receives signals from contact switches **161** and **162** which detect the front-back position of a seat and the reclining angle of the seat and detects the location of the head of the seated listener.

[0027] The controlling section **150** includes a microprocessor, acquires head position information of the listener from the position detecting section **160** by executing a control program to be described later referring to FIG.18, refers to various setting information and a table stored in a storing medium (for example, semiconductor memory) (not shown), outputs to the motor driving section **130** the control commands for adjusting the opening angles of the speakers **101** to **104**, the differences of angles of elevations between the speakers **101** to **104** and the angles of elevations of the speaker units **SP1** and **SP2** and outputs to the sound processing section **141** the control signal for adjusting sound volumes from the speakers **101** to **104** and the phases of output sounds from the speakers **101** to **104**, depending on the current listening position. The motor driver section **130** precisely controls the drive amount of the corresponding driving motor according to the above control commands and changes the opening angles of the speakers **101** to **104**, the differences of angles of elevations between the speakers **101** to **104** and the angles of elevations of the speaker units **SP1** and **SP2** to target values. Further, the sound processing section **141** changes the sound volumes to be outputted from the speakers **101** to **104** and the phases of sounds to be outputted from these speakers **101** to **104**, according to the control signals from the controlling section **150**. Further, the sound volume and the phase are controlled by the sound processing section **141**, in this case, to adjust the sound pressure level and a shift in phases caused by adjustment of the above opening angle, the differences of angles of elevations and the angles of elevations.

[0028] Further, the controlling section **150** is a controlling apparatus that controls the speaker system **100** and may be installed outside the speaker system **100** or may be incorporated inside. Further, the controlling section **150** may be incorporated in an audio device such as a car audio device. In this case, the controlling section of the audio device such as the car audio device executes a control program to be described later in FIG.18.

[0029] Further, with the present embodiment, the position detecting section **160** detects the current listening position (for example, the position of the head of the listener) based on detected signals from the contact switches **161** and **162** installed in the seat. The method of detecting the position of the head of the listener from the seat position provides an

effect of realizing the present invention at a lower cost and at more ease. Further, although only the contact switches **161** and **162** in one seat are shown in FIG.2, in practice, a set of contact switches **161** and **162** are installed in the driver's seat and in the front passenger seat. That is, the current first listening position is detected based on detected signals outputted from the contact switches **161** and **162** of the driver's seat side and the current second listening position is detected based on detected signals from a set of contact switches of the front passenger seat side.

[0030] Further, a configuration may be possible where, for example, a camera that takes an image of the vicinity of the listener's head and an image processing section that recognizes an image of positions of the head and ears from this image are installed instead of the position detecting section **160** to directly detect the positions of the head and ears of the listener.

[Basic installment of speakers and speaker units]

[0031] The first R channel speaker **101** and the second R channel speaker **102** are mounted in the dashboard **200** of the driver's seat side such that the opening angle and the angle of elevation described below are formed. Similarly, the third L channel speaker **103** and the fourth L channel speaker **104** are mounted in the dashboard **200** of the front passenger seat side such that the opening angle and the angle of elevation described below are formed.

[0032] (1) The first speaker unit **SP1** is arranged in a location where an extension line of a bisector **170** of the opening angle, which is formed by the directivity axis of the first R channel speaker **101** and the directivity axis of the second R channel speaker **102**, is parallel or virtually parallel to the longitudinal intermedian plane **e** of the vehicle and passes the first listening position. Further, the extension line of the bisector **170** is included in the first reference plane **c** in which the in-phase signal (R) and its reverse phase signal (R) cancel each other. Similarly, the second speaker unit **SP2** is arranged in a location where an extension line of a bisector **180** of the opening angle, which is formed by the directivity axis of the third L channel speaker **103** and the directivity axis of the fourth L channel speaker **104**, is parallel or virtually parallel to the longitudinal intermedian plane **e** of the vehicle and passes the second listening position. The extension line of the bisector **180** is included in the second reference plane **d** in which the in-phase signal (L) and its reverse phase signal (L) cancel each other. By this means, the first R channel speaker **101** and the second R channel speaker **102** are arranged virtually in front of the driver, and the third L channel speaker **103** and the fourth L channel speaker **104** are arranged virtually in front of the listener in the front passenger seat. Consequently, as described above, each listener sitting in the driver's seat and the front passenger seat feels like sound does not come from the front.

[0033] (2) The position of the first speaker unit **SP1** is determined such that the distance of a path **171** through which sound is reflected by a right side glass **210** and reaches from the first R channel speaker **101** the right ear of the driver and the distance of a path **172** through which sound reaches from the third L channel speaker **103** directly the left ear of the driver, are equal. Similarly, the position of the second speaker unit **SP2** is determined such that the distance of a path **173** through which sound reaches from the second R channel speaker **102** directly the right ear of the listener in the front passenger seat and the distance of a path **174** through which sound is reflected by a left side glass **220** and reaches from the fourth L channel speaker **104** the left ear of the driver, are equal.

[0034] (3) The first speaker unit **SP1** and the second speaker unit **SP2** are arranged in positions in plane symmetry with each other with respect to the longitudinal intermedian plane **e** including the longitudinal intermedian line of the vehicle.

[0035] Depending on the size of the vehicular interior, the position of the seat and the shape of the dashboard, there are cases where all of the above arrangement conditions (1) to (3) are not necessarily satisfied. In these cases, the first R channel speaker **101**, the second R channel speaker **102**, the third L channel speaker **103** and the fourth L channel speaker **104** are mounted by adjusting the arrangement and directions such that the above arrangement conditions (1) to (3) are satisfied as much as possible. What matters in hearing is the condition of above (2) that the distance of the path through which sound is reflected by the side glasses **210** and **220** and reaches the listener and the distance of the path through which sound reaches the listener directly, are equal. To prioritize this condition, a method of arranging the first R channel speaker **101** and the second R channel speaker **102**, and the third L channel speaker **103** and the fourth L channel speaker **104** on the dashboard **200** by slightly shifting these speakers right and left or back and forth from the front of the driver or the listener in the front passenger seat, may be adopted. In this case, the first R channel speaker **101**, the second R channel speaker **102**, the third L channel speaker **103** and the fourth L channel speaker **104** may not be directed toward the listener in the driver's seat (i.e. driver) and the listener in the front passenger seat.

[0036] If the first R channel speaker **101**, the second R channel speaker **102**, the third L channel speaker **103** and the fourth L channel speaker **104** are suitably arranged on the dashboard **200** such that the above arrangement conditions (1) and (2) are satisfied, the driver does not listen to sound from the first R channel speaker **101** directly but listens to the sound reflected by the side glass **210**. Consequently, the listener feels like sound based on the in-phase signal (R) comes from a virtual image **105** of the first R channel speaker **101** in the front right outside the vehicle. The listener sitting in the driver's seat feels like the virtual image **105** of this first R channel speaker **101** is in a position in symmetry with the third L channel speaker **103** with respect to the first reference plane **c**. By listening to sound from the virtual

image 105 of this first R channel speaker **101** and sound from the third L channel speaker **103**, the listener sitting in the driver's seat is able to listen to wide stereo sound in the narrow space in the vehicle in which installation of speakers is significantly restricted.

[0037] The second speaker unit **SP2** is arranged in a position in symmetry with the first speaker unit **SP1** with respect to the longitudinal intermedian plane **e** of the vehicle, the listener in the front passenger seat recognizes that there is a virtual image **106** of the fourth L channel speaker **104** in the front left outside the vehicle. Consequently, the listener sitting in the front passenger seat is able to listen to wide stereo sound, like the listener sitting in the driver's seat.

[0038] In this way, the speaker system **100** comprises the speaker unit **SP1** composed of the first R channel speaker **101** that radiates the in-phase R channel signal and the second R channel speaker **102** that radiates the reverse phase R channel signal, and the speaker unit **SP2** composed of the third L channel speaker **103** that radiates the in-phase L channel signal and the fourth L channel speaker **104** that radiates the reverse phase L channel signal. In the speaker unit **SP1**, the first R channel speaker **101** and the second R channel speaker **102** are in plane symmetry with respect to the first reference plane **c** including the current first listening position for the driver, and are arranged such that sound outputted from the first R channel speaker **101** is reflected by the side glass **210** and reaches the first listening position. The speaker unit **SP2** is arranged in a position in plane symmetry with the first speaker unit **SP1** with respect to the longitudinal intermedian plane **e** of the vehicle, the third L channel speaker **103** and the fourth L channel speaker **104** are in plane symmetry with respect to the second reference plane **d** including the current second listening position for the listener in the front passenger seat and are arranged such that sound outputted from the fourth L channel speaker **104** is reflected by the side glass **220** and reaches the second listening position.

[0039] Further, the first R channel speaker **101** and the third L channel speaker **103** are arranged such that the distance through which sound outputted from the first R channel speaker **101** is reflected by the side glass **210** and reaches the first listening position and the distance through which sound outputted from the third L channel speaker **103** reaches directly the first listening position, are equal. The second R channel speaker **102** and the fourth L channel speaker **104** are arranged according to the same relationship as between the positions of the first R channel speaker **101** and the third L channel speaker **103**.

[0040] By the above, it is possible to provide to the listeners, the sound of the R channel and the sound of the L channel with practically no phase difference and no delay. The listeners do not feel a sense of discomfort listening to audio. Further, the listener sitting in the front passenger seat is also able to listen to wide stereo sound like the listener sitting in the driver's seat.

[Detailed arrangement of speakers and speaker units]

[0041] FIG.3 is a plan view illustrating the positions of the speaker unit and the listener, employing an example of the relationship between the positions of the speaker unit **SP1** of the driver's seat side and the listener **P1** in the driver's seat (i.e. driver).

[0042] As shown in FIG.3, the speaker unit **SP1** and the listener **P1** in the driver's seat virtually face each other. Further, the reference symbol "a" is assigned to the directivity axis of the first R channel speaker **101** that radiates sound based on the in-phase signal (R) and the reference symbol "b" is assigned to the directivity axis of the second R channel speaker **102** that radiates sound based on the reverse phase signal (R). The reference symbol "c" is assigned to the above-described first reference plane. The first reference plane **c** is a null plane in which sound based on the in-phase signal (R) and sound based on the reverse phase signal (R) cancel each other. Further, assuming that the angle formed by the directivity axis **a** and the first reference plane **c** is **rv1** and the angle formed by the directivity axis **b** and the first reference plane **c** is **rv2**, the condition of the following equation 1 for providing an effect of making the listener **P1** sitting in the driver's seat feel like sound does not come from the front, is established.

[0043]

$$rv1=rv2 \quad \dots \quad (\text{Equation } 1)$$

Further, if the above equation 1 is satisfied, the speaker unit **SP1** and the listener **P1** need not to face each other as shown in, for example, FIG.3.

[0044] Although the positions of the speaker unit **SP1** of the driver's seat side and the listener **P1** in the driver's seat (i.e. driver) have been described above, the same applies to the listener in the front passenger seat and the speaker unit **SP2** of the front passenger seat side, that is, the in-phase signal (L) and the reverse phase signal (R).

[0045] FIG.4 is a schematic view illustrating the relationship between the direction of a speaker unit and the location of the listener, employing an example of the relationship between the positions of the speaker unit **SP1** of the driver's seat side, the listener **P1** in the driver's seat (i.e. driver) and the listener **P2** in the front passenger seat.

[0046] In FIG.4, the speaker unit **SP1** of the driver's seat side is installed on the dashboard **200** shown in FIG.1. Further, the reflecting plane A of FIG.4 is the side glass **210** of FIG.1. This space inside the vehicle is represented by X and Y. In the width X in the space in the vehicle, to the reference point of the reflecting plane **A**, there are the distance **x3** from the speaker unit **SP1** of the driver's seat side, the distance **x1** from the listener **P1** in the driver's seat and the distance **x2** from the listener **P2** in the front passenger seat. Further, in the depth Y in the space in the vehicle, there is the distance **y1** from the listener **P1** in the driver's seat to the reference point of the speaker unit **SP1** and there is the distance **y2** from the listener **P2** in the front passenger seat to the reference point of speaker unit **SP1**.

[0047] The reference symbol " α " (see the dotted line) is assigned to the path through which the sound outputted from the first R channel speaker **101** composing the speaker unit **SP1** (i.e. the in-phase signal (R)) is reflected by the reflecting plane **A** and reaches the listener **P1** in the driver's seat, and the reference symbol " β " (see the dotted line) is assigned to the path through which the sound outputted from the second R channel speaker **102** (i.e. the reverse phase signal (R)) reaches directly the listener **P2** in the front passenger seat. Further, in case of FIG.4, the speaker unit **SP1** and the listener **P1** in the driver's seat virtually face each other as described in FIG.3, and, sounds radiated from the first R channel speaker **101** and the second R channel speaker **102** cancel each other near the first reference plane **c**, and so the listener **P1** sitting in the driver's seat feels like sound does not come from the front.

[0048] Now, in the space inside the vehicle X and Y, such a relationship that the distance **y1** to the listener **P1** in the driver's seat and the distance **y2** to the listener **P2** in the front passenger seat are equal and the distance of the path α through which sound is reflected by the reflecting plane **A** and reaches the listener **P1** in the driver's seat from the first R channel speaker **101** of the speaker unit **SP1** and the distance of the path β through which sound reaches directly the listener **P2** in the front passenger seat from the second R channel speaker **102** are equal, can be represented as follows.

[0049]

Condition 1: $y1 = y2 = y$

Condition 2: path α = path β

$$\text{Path } \alpha = ((x1 + x3)^2 + (y1)^2)^{0.5} \dots (\text{Equation } 2)$$

$$\text{Path } \beta = ((x2 - x3)^2 + (y2)^2)^{0.5} \dots (\text{Equation } 3)$$

The following equation 4 can be derived from the condition 2 and the above equations 2 and 3. Equation 5 can be obtained by applying the condition 1 to the equation 4 and figuring out **x3**.

[0050]

$$((x1 + x3)^2 + (y1)^2)^{0.5} = ((x2 - x3)^2 + (y2)^2)^{0.5} \dots (\text{Equation } 4)$$

$$x3 = 0.5 * (x2 - x1) \dots (\text{Equation } 5)$$

According to the above equation 5, the speaker unit **SP1** needs to be arranged in the location at the distance **x3** which is spaced apart from the reflecting plane **A** by a half of the distance between the two listeners **P1** and **P2**.

[0051] Although the positions of the speaker unit **SP1** of the driver's seat side, the listener **P1** in the driver's seat and the listener **P2** in the front passenger seat are described above, the same applies to the arrangement of the speaker unit **SP2** of the front passenger seat side.

[0052] As long as the arrangement shown in FIG.4 is realized, it is possible to provide a listening environment which does not give a sense of discomfort to listeners **P1** and **P2**. However, FIG.4 shows an example of a case where listeners **P1** and **P2** do not move, and, if the positions of the heads of listeners **P1** and **P2** (hereinafter "positions of listeners" or simply "listeners **P1** and **P2**") move back and forth or right and left, there is a case where the above optimal listening positions are shifted and listeners **P1** and **P2** listening to sound from the speaker system **100** feel a sense of discomfort.

To be more specific, if the position of the listener is shifted from a null plane (a plane in which sound based on the in-phase signal and sound based on the reverse phase signal cancel each other), sound comes from a speaker unit which assumingly does not exist and stereo sounds of the right and left speakers (one is a virtual image) are undermined. Further, a sense of discomfort is caused by the difference between the sound volume levels before and after movement and between the sound volumes of the right and left speakers.

[0053] For example, in the speaker system **100** of FIG.1, if the driver or the listener sitting in the front passenger seat moves the seat back and forth as shown in FIG.2 or changes the reclining angle, the head of the driver or the listener in the front passenger seat moves back and forth and consequently the listening position moves back and forth. In view of the above background, the speaker system **100** detects the current first and/or second listening positions if the location of the listener changes and, according to the detection result, automatically adjusts the opening angles of the speakers **101** to **104**, the differences of angles of elevations between the speakers **101** to **104** and the angles of elevation of the speaker units **SP1** and **SP2** (hereinafter referred to as "such as directions of the speakers **101** to **104**"). Details will be described below.

[Automatic adjustment of listening positions]

[Adjustment factors]

[0054] If the position of the listener moves, the following factors need to be focused upon to adjust such as directions of the speakers **101** to **104**.

1. Upon change back and forth

- Shift in the null plane (little)
- Change in the directivity axis of the speaker (moderate)
- Change in the path length through which sound is reflected by the reflecting plane and reaches the listener (little)

2. Upon change right and left

- Shift in the null plane (significant)
- Change in the directivity axis of the speaker (little)
- Change in the path length through which sound is reflected by the reflecting plane and reaches the listener (significant)

3. Upon change up and down

- Change in the directivity axis of a speaker

Further, the above 1. to 3. are factors taking into account one speaker (for example, the first R channel speaker **101**) that reflects sound on the reflecting plane and transmits sound to the listener. A change in the directivity axis of the speaker, a change in the path length and a change in the difference between the right and left paths, except the shift in a null plane, cause a change in the sound volume. Further, a change in the sound volume of the above speaker spreads to the sound volume difference from the other speaker (for example, the third R channel speaker **103**) that transmits sound directly to the listener.

[0055] FIG.5 is a schematic view illustrating the relationship between the positions of the speaker unit and the listener if the positions of the listener changes back and forth. FIG.6 is a schematic view illustrating the relationship between the positions of the speaker unit and the listener if the location of the listener changes right and left. The symbol "•" in the figure represents listeners **P1** and **P2**, and **P1'** represents the position after the listener **P1** moves. Further, the solid lines connecting the speaker units and the listeners represent the paths from the speaker units to the listeners. However, these solid lines do not represent the directivity axes of the speakers. Further, the bold broken line in the figure represents the null plane before change and the bold chain line in the figure represents the null plane after the change.

[0056] First, the above factors if the position of the listener **P1** changes back and forth (that is, "shift in a null plane," "change in a directivity axis of the speaker," "change in the path length through which sound is reflected on the reflecting plane and reaches the listener") will be described.

[0057] As shown in FIG.5, the listener **P1** in the driver's seat (i.e. driver) moves forward and is located at **P1'**. The listener **P2** in the front passenger seat does not move. In case of forward movement, the null plane (i.e. a plane in which sound based on the in-phase signal and sound based on the reverse phase signal cancel each other), in which the right and left path lengths from the speakers to the listener **P1** are equal, moves forward. To see the movement of the null

plane with reference to the line included in the null plane, the angle of the line included in the null plane changes (see the bold broken lines in the figure to the bold chain line in the figure). The difference between the right and left paths does not change. Further, given that the directivity axes of the speakers are shifted from the center of the listener **P1'**, the right and left speakers are supposed to be used in an area of low speaker characteristics toward the listener. In this way, if the listener **P1** moves back and forth, it is necessary to adjust the "shift in a null plane" and the "change in the directivity axis of the speaker."

[0058] Next, the above factors if the location of the listener **P1** changes right and left will be described.

[0059] As shown in FIG.6, the listener **P1** moves forward and is located at **P1'**. The listener **P2** does not move. In case of right and left movement, the right and left path lengths from the speakers to the listener **P1** significantly change, thereby producing the difference between the right and left paths and, furthermore, the null plane moves right and left significantly. To see movement of the null plane with reference to a line included in the null plane, the angle of the line included in the null plane changes significantly (see the bold broken line in the figure to the bold chain line in the figure). Further, the directivity axes of the speakers are shifted from the center of the listener **P1'**. Consequently, if the listener **P1** moves to the right and left, it is necessary to adjust the "shift in the null plane", the "change in the directivity axis of the speaker" and the "change in the path length." The "shift in the null plane" in particular is significantly great compared to the case of the change back and forth and therefore needs to be adjusted sufficiently.

[0060] FIGs.7A and 7B illustrate directivity axes of the speaker if the location of the listener changes up and down, and FIG.7A shows the directivity axes in the horizontal direction and FIG.7B shows the directivity axes in the vertical direction. In FIG.7A, the listener **P0** is the center location (in which speaker characteristics are optimal) of a directivity axis **301** of the speaker, and the listeners **P1** and **P2** are positions shifted from the center of the directivity axis **301** due to up and down movement of the listeners. Further, as shown in FIG.7B, even if the location of the listener moves up and down, there is no change in the side glass **210** in the vertical direction and, consequently, only the angle of elevation needs to be adjusted.

[0061] FIG.8 is a perspective view illustrating the relationship between the positions of the speaker unit and the listener if the location of the listener changes right and left. The symbols **P0** to **P2** in the figure represent the positions of the listener, and **P0** represents the original location of the listener, and **P1** and **P2** represents the positions of the listener if the listener moves right and left. In FIG.8, if the position of the listener changes right and left (i.e. X axis direction), the shortest path **311** that connects the speaker and **P0**, **P1** and **P2** by reflection through the side glass (Y axis direction) is formed on a plane **312** encircled by the broken line of FIG.8, and so the angle of elevation does not change.

[Method of Adjustment]

[0062] The shift in the null plane, the change in the directivity axis of the speaker, the change in the path length and the change in the difference between the right and left paths, which are mentioned above, are adjusted by operations of the speaker and speaker unit (i.e. driving system by means of driving motors). The operations of the speaker and speaker unit include the operations for adjusting "rotation," "opening angle," "difference of angles of elevations" and "angle of elevation." Further, a change in the sound volume and sound volume difference that cannot be adjusted by the operations of the speaker and speaker unit, are adjusted by signal processing in the speaker (i.e. signal processing system by means of the sound processing section **141**). In other words, a change in the sound volume and the sound volume difference that are left after adjustment by the operations of the speaker and speaker unit, are adjusted by signal processing of the speaker.

[0063] First, adjustment of "rotation," "opening angle," "difference of angles of elevation" and "angle of elevation" will be described.

[0064] FIGs.9A to 9D are schematic views illustrating operations of the speaker and speaker unit. The speaker unit **SP1** is employed as an example, the same applies to the speaker unit **SP2**.

[0065] As shown in FIG.9A, the "rotation" adjustment is directed to rotating the speaker unit **SP1** entirely to the right or to the left with respect to a point **O**. The direction of the null plane in which silence is generated in theory, can be changed by a driving motor **712** (see FIG.20).

[0066] As shown in FIG.9B, in the "opening angle" adjustment, by driving the driving motor **111** to widen or narrow the angles between the directivity axes of the first R channel speaker **101** / the second R channel speaker **102** and a reference plane **401** while maintaining the plane symmetry with respect to the reference plane **401**, it is possible to change the path and the angle through which sound is reflected by the side glass and reaches the listener.

[0067] As shown in FIG.9C, the "difference of angles of elevations" refers to the difference between the angles (hereinafter "angles of elevations") of an directivity axis **411** of the first R channel speaker **101** of the speaker unit **SP1** and an directivity axis **412** of the second R channel speaker **102** of the speaker unit **SP1** with respect to a horizontal plane **402**. The "difference of angle of elevation" is adjusted by driving the speaker by the driving motor **112** and the null plane is inclined a predetermined angle from **90** degrees with respect to the horizontal plane **402**, so that it is possible to change the direction of the null plane. Only the above method of using the "rotation" adjustment and this method of using

the "difference of angle of elevation" adjustment can change the direction of the null plane. With the present embodiment, the direction of the null plane is adjusted using the "difference of angle of elevation" adjustment and is adjusted using the "rotation" adjustment with Embodiment 2 (described later). Further, the control of the null plane by the adjustment as to difference of angle of elevation is a little complicated and therefore description will be added using FIGs.11 to 14.

[0068] As shown in FIG.9D, in the "angle of elevation" adjustment, by widening or narrowing angle of elevations 403 of the first R channel speaker **101** and the second R channel speaker **102** with respect to the horizontal plane **402** while maintaining the angle of elevation difference between an directivity axis **411** of the first R channel speaker **101** of the speaker unit **SP1** and an directivity axis **412** (not shown in FIG.9D) of the second R channel speaker **102** of the speaker unit **SP1**, it is possible to change the path and the angle through which sound is reflected by the side glass and reaches the listener. The speaker unit **SP1** is entirely driven by the driving motor **113** as a method of changing the angle of elevation while maintaining the above difference of angle of elevation.

[0069] FIG.10 shows a table of control content of "rotation," "opening angle" and "angle of elevation" corresponding to a change in the location of the listener (i.e. the location of the head) employing the listener **P1** in the driver's seat (i.e. right seat) as an example. Further, FIG.10 shows an example where the direction of the null plane is controlled using the "rotation," and so the "difference of angle of elevation" is not shown.

[0070] In FIG.10, if, for example, the location of the listener moves "to the front" from the original location, control is carried out such that the rotation is made to the "left," the opening angle is "widened" and the angle of elevation is "widened." Similarly, if the location of the listener moves "to the back" from the original location, control is carried out such that the rotation is made to the "right," the opening angle is "narrowed" and the angle of elevation is "narrowed." Further, in case of the listener **P2** in the front passenger seat (i.e. left seat), the case of the listener **P1** is reversed.

[Control of the null plane by the angle of elevation difference adjustment]

[0071] Next, referring to FIG.11 to FIG.14, control of the null plane by the angle of elevation difference adjustment will be described.

1. Regarding generation of the null plane

[0072] FIG.11 and FIG.12 illustrate the null plane formed in a certain plane at equal distances from two sound sources, and FIG.11 is a three-dimensional view of the null plane and FIG.12 is a two-dimensional view of the null plane.

[0073] In FIG.11 and FIG.12, if sounds having opposite phases from one another are outputted from two point sound sources **501** and **502**, sound pressure is equal between places at equal distances from both the sound sources **501** and **502** and sound waves of opposite signs arrive and sound from two sound sources cancel each other in such a place thereby generating silence. Further, a plane in which points at equal distances from both the sound sources **501** and **502** are collected becomes a vertical bisector plane of lines connecting the two sound sources **501** and **502**. A plane in which sounds from the two sound sources **501** and **502** cancel each other in this way thereby generating silence, is defined as a null plane **500**.

2. Displacement of sound source by changing the difference of angle of elevation

[0074] FIGs.13A and 13B illustrate the null plane of the speakers due to the difference of angle of elevation in a state of no difference of angle of elevation, and FIG. 13A is a perspective view of the speakers and FIG.13B is a front view of the speakers. FIGs.14A and 14B illustrate the null plane of the speakers due to the difference of angle of elevation in a state where the difference of angle of elevation exists, and FIG.14A is a perspective view of the speakers and FIG. 14B is a front view of the speakers.

[0075] In FIG.13 and FIG.14, if the above speakers **511** and **512** are typical dynamic speakers, the center of a speaker corn **521** included in the speaker **511** becomes a virtual point sound source **501**. Further, the center of a speaker corn **522** included in the speaker **512** which makes a pair with the speaker **511** becomes a virtual point sound source **502**. In the speaker system **100** in FIG.1 and FIG.2, the speaker **511** and the speaker **512** correspond to the first R channel speaker **101** and the third L channel speaker **103**, and the second L channel speaker **102** and the fourth L channel speaker **104**, respectively.

[0076] Further, as shown in FIG.13, if signals having opposite phases from each other are outputted at the same time in a state of no difference of angle of elevation, the null plane **500** is formed in the vertical bisector plane with respect to the line connecting the point sound source **502** which is the center of the speaker corn **522** and the point sound source **501** which is the center of the speaker corn **521**. If the difference of angle of elevation as shown in FIG.14 is provided by applying the angle of elevation to the speaker **512** which is one of the speakers in the state of FIG.13, the location of the point sound source **502** which is the center of the speaker corn **522** moves up. By this means, as shown in FIG. 14B, the vertical bisector plane of the line connecting the point sound source **502** and point sound source **501** which is

the center of the speaker corn 521 inclines consequently, so that it is possible to incline the null plane **500**. In this way, the inclination of the null plane **500** can be changed by the difference of angle of elevation between the two speakers **511** and **512**, and the first listening position and the second listening position can be placed on the null plane **500** by changing the inclination. Further, although the null plane **500** can be changed by rotating speaker units, adjustment of the null plane **500** by rotation is carried out not by inclining the null plane **500** but by moving the null plane **500** while maintaining the vertical state where a speaker unit is used as the axis.

[Correction of the path length based on the phase difference]

[0077] Next, correction of the path length based on the phase difference will be described.

[0078] FIG.15 illustrates correction of the path length based on to the phase difference. The symbols **P1** and **P2** in the figure represent the positions of listeners, the symbol **P1'** represents the location of the listener **P1** after leftward movement, the symbols **U1** and **U2** represent the positions where the speaker units **SP1** and **SP2** are arranged. Further, in the speaker system **100** of FIG.1, a reflecting plane **600** and a reflecting plane **620** correspond to the side glasses **210** and **220**.

1. In case the listener **P1** moves right and left

[0079] Although the distance l_1 from **U1** to **P1** and the distance l_2 from **U2** to **P1** are equal at the point **P1**, the difference is produced between the distance l_1 and the distance l_2 to **P1'** after movement. Here, the symbol l_1' refers to the distance through which the sound outputted from the speaker unit **SP1** is reflected by the reflecting plane **600** and reaches **P1'** from the location **U1** after movement, and the symbol l_2' refers to the distance through which the sound outputted from the speaker unit **SP2** reaches **P1'** from the location **U2** directly. The relational equation of the difference ΔL between l_1' and l_2' is as follows.

[0080]

$$l_1' = \sqrt{\left(\frac{x_1 + x_2}{2} + \Delta x\right)^2 + y^2} \quad \dots \text{ (Equation 6)}$$

$$l_3' = \sqrt{\left(\frac{x_2 + x_1}{2} - \Delta x\right)^2 + y^2} \quad \dots \text{ (Equation 7)}$$

$$\Delta L = l_1' - l_3' = \sqrt{\left(\frac{x_1 + x_2}{2} + \Delta x\right)^2 + y^2} - \sqrt{\left(\frac{x_2 + x_1}{2} - \Delta x\right)^2 + y^2} \quad \dots \text{ (Equation 8)}$$

The sign of Δx in the above equations 6 to 8 is positive in the left direction in FIG.15.

2. Regarding derivation of the above equations 6 to 8

[0081] The positions **P1** and **P2** are spaced apart from the plane **610** by the distance y .

[0082] The positions **P1** and **P2** are located spaced apart from the reflecting plane **600** by the distance x_1 and the distance x_2 , respectively.

[0083] Further, the distance x_3 from the reflecting plane **600** of **U1**, which is equal to the distance l_1 through which sound is reflected by the reflecting plane **600** and reaches **P1** from **U1** and the distance l_3 connecting **U2** and **P1** directly, is represented by the following equation 9.

[0084]

$$x_3 = \frac{x_2 - x_1}{2} \dots \text{(Equation 9)}$$

Similarly, the distance x_4 from reflecting plane **620** of **U2**, which is equal to the distance l_4 through which sound is reflected by the reflecting plane **620** and reaches **P2** from **U2** and the distance l_2 connecting **U1** and **P2** directly, is represented by the following equation 10. Further, in the following equation 10, the symbol x_5 represents the distance between **P2** and the reflecting plane **620**, and the symbol x_6 represents the distance between **P1** and the reflecting plane **620**.

[0085]

$$x_4 = \frac{x_6 - x_5}{2} \dots \text{(Equation 10)}$$

To make the distances l_2 and l_3 equal, the following equation 13 needs to be satisfied. The following equations 11 and 12 for deriving the equation 13 use the above-described equations 9 and 10.

[0086]

$$\text{from } l_2 = \sqrt{(x_2 - x_3)^2 + y^2} \text{ and Equation 9,}$$

$$l_2 = \sqrt{\left(\frac{x_2 + x_1}{2}\right)^2 + y^2} \dots \text{(Equation 11)}$$

$$\text{from } l_3 = \sqrt{(x_6 - x_4)^2 + y^2} \text{ and Equation 10,}$$

$$l_3 = \sqrt{\left(\frac{x_6 + x_5}{2}\right)^2 + y^2} \dots \text{(Equation 12)}$$

if $l_2 = l_3$ is solved,

$$x_2 + x_1 = x_6 + x_5 \dots \text{(Equation 13)}$$

Further, given that the distance between **P1** and **P2** does not change, the following equation 14 holds.

[0087]

$$x_6 - x_5 = x_2 - x_1 \dots \text{(Equation 14)}$$

Consequently, the following relational equations 15 and 16 are obtained from the above equations 13 and 14.
[0088]

$$x_5 = x_1 \dots (\text{Equation 15})$$

$$x_6 = x_2 \dots (\text{Equation 16})$$

On the other hand, if, as to the point **P1'** shifted by Δx from **P1**, the distance through which sound is reflected by the reflecting plane **600** and reaches **P1'** from **U1**, is the distance l_1' and the distance connecting **U2** and **P1'** directly is the distance l_3' , the following relational equations hold.

$$[0089] \text{ from } l_1' = \sqrt{(x_1 + x_3 + \Delta x)^2 + y^2} \text{ and Equation 9,}$$

$$l_1' = \sqrt{\left(\frac{x_1 + x_2}{2} + \Delta x\right)^2 + y^2}$$

$$\text{from } l_3' = \sqrt{(x_6 - x_4 - \Delta x)^2 + y^2} \text{ and Equations 10, 15 and 16,}$$

$$l_3' = \sqrt{\left(\frac{x_2 + x_1}{2} - \Delta x\right)^2 + y^2}$$

Consequently, the difference ΔL between the distance l_1' to **P1'** that moved by the distance Δx in the **X** direction from **P1** and the distance l_3' is represented by the following relational equation.

[0090] From $\Delta L = l_1' - l_3'$,

$$\therefore \Delta L = \sqrt{\left(\frac{x_1 + x_2}{2} + \Delta x\right)^2 + y^2} - \sqrt{\left(\frac{x_2 + x_1}{2} - \Delta x\right)^2 + y^2}$$

that is, the Equation 8 is determined.

3. Correction of shifts in arrival times due to generation of the distance difference

[0091] If, in **P1'**, there is the difference between the distance l_1' through which sound is reflected by the reflecting plane 600 and reaches **P1'** from **U1** and the distance l_3' connecting **U2** and **P1'** directly, sound outputted from **U1** (for example, Rch speech) and sound outputted from **U2** (foreexample, Lch speech) does not arrive at the same time, which produces a shift. The time ΔT [second] which shifts in this case is determined as in the following equation 17 based on the path difference ΔL [m] and sound speed **S** [m/s]. Further, ΔL has a sign, and ΔT has a sign.

[0092]

$$\Delta T = \Delta L / S \text{ [second]} \dots (\text{Equation 17})$$

Consequently, to correct this shift ΔT , only sound outputted from the first R channel speaker **101** needs to be set by ΔT [second] ahead of sound outputted from other speakers (from the second R channel speaker **102** to the fourth L channel speaker **104**) or sound outputted from other speakers (from the second R channel speaker **102** to the fourth L channel speaker **104**) needs to be set by ΔT [second] back of sound outputted from the first R channel speaker **101**.

[0093] The factors of the adjusting methods if the location of the listener changes has been described. A case will be described below where these methods of adjustment are applied to the actual speaker system **100** (FIG.1). With the present embodiment, the adjustment is carried out according to the conditions shown in FIG.16 and FIG.17.

[0094] FIGs. 16A and 16B are schematic views illustrating methods of the adjustment applied to the speaker system **100** and FIG.17 shows a table of control content of the phase differences in the location of the listener (i.e. the location of the head). The same components as in FIG. 9 are assigned the same reference numerals.

[0095] (1) With the speaker system **100** of the present embodiment, the shift in the null plane in which silence is generated in theory is adjusted by not using the "rotation" adjustment of rotating the entire speaker unit but using the "difference of angle of elevation" adjustment for the speaker as described in detail in FIG. 13 and FIG.14.

[0096] (2) With the speaker system **100** of the present embodiment, instead of adjusting the "opening angle" by widening or narrowing the angle with respect to the reference plane **401** while maintaining the plane symmetry with respect to the reference plane **401** shown in FIG.9, an "opening angle **A450**" for adjusting with respect to the reference plane **401** only the opening angle of the first R channel speaker **101** which is one of the speakers, is controlled as shown in FIG.16A. For Lch, only the opening angle of the fourth L channel speaker **104** is adjusted in the same way.

[0097] (3) In the speaker system **100** of the present embodiment, an "angle of elevation **B460**" for adjusting the angle of elevation of the overall speaker unit is controlled as shown in FIG.16B.

[0098] Consequently, the angle of elevation **B460** of the overall speaker units **SP1** and **SP2** are controlled by the driving motors **113** and **123**. Further, the difference of angle of elevation between the first R channel speaker **101** and the second R channel speaker **102** installed in the speaker unit **SP1** and the difference of angle of elevation between the third L channel speaker **103** and the fourth L channel speaker **104** installed in the speaker unit **SP2** are controlled by the driving motors **112** and **122**, respectively.

[0099] In this way, with the present embodiment, only the opening angle **A450** and the angle of elevation **B460** are adjusted. By employing the method of adjusting only the opening angle **A450** and the angle of elevation **B460**, it is possible to reduce complexity of the mechanism and decrease cost. Further, it is more effective to adjust the opening angle and adjust paths through which sounds are reflected by the side glasses **210** and **220** than to adjust the null plane in which silence is generated in theory by rotation.

[0100] With the present embodiment, the inclination of the null plane in which silence is generated by providing the difference of angle of elevation, is controlled. Consequently, if the operation is limited as in the actual system, the null plane in which silence is generated in theory by slightly shifting the angle of elevation **B460** up or down with respect to the listener and adjusting the differences of angles of elevations according to the table shown in FIG.17, is adjusted such that the null plane matches the location of the listener. In this case, if the listener is positioned on the directivity axis of the speaker unit, an attention must be paid because the null plane in which silence is generated cannot be adjusted by providing the difference of angle of elevation. Further, as to the definitions of positive and negative of the difference of angle of elevation in the table of FIG.17, "positive" means that the angle of elevation of the outer speaker **101** or **104** is greater than the angle of elevation of the inner speaker **102** or **103**, and "negative" means that the angle of elevation of the outer speaker **101** or **104** is smaller than the angle of elevation of the inner speaker **102** or **103**.

[0101] FIG.18 is a flowchart showing automatic adjustment processing in the speaker system **100**. This flow is executed repeatedly by the CPU in the controlling section **150** at a predetermined cycle. Further, although this flow employs an example of movement in the location of the listener **P1**, the same adjustment processing is executed with respect to movement in the location of the listener **P2**.

[0102] This program starts following the change in the location of the listener **P1** (step **S1**), whether or not the location of the listener **P1** moved back and forth is decided in step **S11**. The movement in the location of the listener **P1** is decided by acquiring head location information of the listener from the position detecting section **160** (see FIG.2). A typical example where the listener **P1** moves back and forth is a case where the listener **P1** moves the seat to the front or to the back or changes the reclining angle of the seat. Further, although it is difficult to detect right and left movement in the location of the listener **P1** (described later) only by signals from the contact switches **161** and **162** installed in the seat, this movement can be detected by, for example, increasing contact switches in the back of the seat. Further, it is possible to acquire head location information of the listener more accurately using a location detecting means of a camera that takes an image of the vicinity of the listener's head and an image processing section, instead of detecting positions of contact switches. Further, if the listener **P1** is the driver in the driver's seat, the right and left movement seems little likely. Further, oblique movement involves movement in the front-back position, and is categorized as movement of the front-back position.

[0103] If the location of the listener **P1** moved back and forth in the above step **S11**, the null plane is adjusted in step **S12**. The controlling section **150** carries out an arithmetic operation for adjusting the null plane for placing the null plane

above the location of the listener **P1** based on the amount of movement in the front-back position of the listener **P1**, converts the arithmetic operation result into control parameters and outputs the control parameters to the motor driver section **130**. The motor driver section **130** drives an applicable driving motor (herein, driving motor **112**) to reach the target value based on control commands from the controlling section **150**. Although, as described above, there are two methods of carrying out the "rotation" and changing the "difference of angle of elevation" to adjust the null plane, the null plane is adjusted by changing the difference of angle of elevation with the present embodiment. The controlling section **150** transmits to the motor driver section **130** the control commands for controlling opening angles, differences of angles of elevations and angles of elevations of the speakers **101** to **104** and speaker units **SP1** and **SP2**. By supplying the target value showing the "difference of angle of elevation" from these control commands, the motor driver section **130** drives the driving motor **112** to a predetermined amount, provides a difference of angle of elevation between the directivity axis of the first R channel speaker **101** and the directivity axis of the second R channel speaker **102** and inclines the null plane (see FIG. 14), so that it is possible to place the null plane in the location to which the listener **P1** moves.

[0104] Next, by changing the opening angle in the speaker unit **SP1** in step **S13**, reflected sound is adjusted such that quality of sound that is reflected and reaches the listener **P1** improves. The decision criterion for this adjustment includes sound pressure, distortion and frequency characteristics. The controlling section **150** stores as a table the relationship between the location of the listener **P1** and the opening angle at which the reflected sound is heard the best for the listener **P1** and changes the opening angle referring to this table. Adjusting of the opening angle according to the present embodiment is directed to adjusting only the opening angle of the first R channel speaker **101** shown in FIG.16. The motor driver section **130** adjusts the reflected sound by driving the driving motor **111** to a predetermined amount and changing the opening angle of the first R channel speaker **101**. By means of the above processings, as in the case of the change to the back and forth shown in FIG.5, the null plane is adjusted and the reflected sound is adjusted.

[0105] Next, the difference between right and left sound volumes is adjusted in the location of the listener **P1** in step **S14**, and the flow proceeds to step **S21**. Although the adjustment of the reflected sound (Rch in this description) is finished by controlling the above opening angle, given that the reflected sound (Rch) is adjusted, it is necessary to adjust direct sound (Lch) corresponding to the reflected sound (Rch). Then, by changing the sound volume of the third L channel speaker **103**, the right and left sound volumes are adjusted to be the same. The controlling section **150** outputs control commands for controlling the output volumes and the phases of the output sounds of the speakers **101** to **104**, to the sound processing section **141**. The controlling section **150** outputs the control commands for changing the sound volume of the third L channel speaker **103** to the sound processing section **141** to change the sound volume of the third L channel speaker **103** and adjust the sound volumes of the right and left speakers to be the same.

[0106] Processings in the above step **S11** to step **S14** are referred to as "processing A".

[0107] If the location of the listener **P1** did not move back and forth in the above step **S11** or after the processing of the above step **S14** is carried out, whether or not the location of the listener **P1** moved right and left is decided in step **S21**. If the location of the listener **P1** moved right and left, the difference between the right and left paths is corrected in step **S22**. To be more specific, the difference between the right and left paths is adjusted by setting the phase of the sound outputted from the first R channel speaker **101** composing the speaker unit **SP1** ahead or back of phases of the sounds outputted from the other speakers **102** to **104**. As shown in FIG.6, if the location of the listener **P1** changes right and left, the right and left path lengths from the speakers to the listener **P1** significantly change, thereby producing a difference between the right and left paths. The difference between the right and left paths produces a difference between the times the right and left sounds arrive and a shift in the right and left sounds. In this step **S22**, the difference between the right and left paths is adjusted by changing the phases of the output sounds.

[0108] Next, the null plane is adjusted in step **S23**. The method of adjustment is the same as in the case of the above step **S12**. However, in case of change to the right and left, as shown in FIG.6, the null plane moves significantly right and left compared to the case of change to the back and forth, and so the null plane needs to be adjusted significantly.

[0109] Next, by changing the opening angle in the speaker unit **SP1** in step **S24**, reflected sound is adjusted such that quality of sound that is reflected and reaches the listener **P1** improves. The method of adjustment is the same as in the case of the above step **S13**.

[0110] Next, the difference between the right and left sound volumes in the location of the listener **P1** is adjusted in step **S25**, and the flow proceeds to step **S31**. The method of adjustment is the same as in the case of the above step **S14**.

[0111] Processings of the above step **S21** to step **S25** are referred to as "processing B".

[0112] If the location of the listener **P1** did not move right and left in the above step **S21** or after processing of the above step **S25** is carried out, the null plane is adjusted in step **S31**. The method of adjustment is the same as in the case of the above step **S12**. The amount of adjustment of the null plane is little in this case.

[0113] Next, by changing the opening angle in the speaker unit **SP1** in step **S32**, reflected sound is adjusted such that quality of sound that is reflected and reaches the listener **P1** improves. The method of adjustment is the same as in the case of the above step **S13**.

[0114] Next, this flow is finished by adjusting the difference between the right and left sound volumes in the location of the listener **P1** in step **S33** and adjusting the difference between the right and left sound volumes in the location of

the listener **P2** in step **S34**. If the location of the listener **P1** moves up and down, a shift is produced with respect to the listener **P1** between the directivity axes of one speaker that has been adjusted (the first R channel speaker **101**) and the other speaker (the third L channel speaker **103**). In step **S33**, this difference between the right and left sound volumes is adjusted such that the sound volumes of the right and left channels are the same for the listener **P1**, by changing the sound volume of the inner speaker (the third L channel speaker **103**) of the speaker unit **SP2**. Similarly, in step **S34**, the difference between the right and left sound volumes is adjusted such that the sound volumes of the right and left channels are the same for the listener **P2**, by changing the sound volume of the inner speaker (the second L channel speaker **103**) of the speaker unit **SP1**.

[0115] Processings of the above step **S31** to step **S34** are referred to as "processing C".

[0116] The order to execute the above processings **A**, **B** and **C** can be switched. Further, the timing to execute this flow is arbitrary. For example, the program may be started if the location of the listener changes more than a predetermined distance and may be executed at all times and adjustment may be carried out in real time processing. Further, an embodiment is possible where the flow is automatically executed if the listener is seated, sound is inputted or an audio device is energized. It naturally follows that the flow may be executed by a command of the listener.

[0117] As described above in detail, according to the present embodiment, the speaker system **100** has: the first speaker unit **SP1** that includes the first R channel speaker **101** outputting sound to be heard in the first listening position and the second R channel speaker **102** outputting sound to be heard in the second listening position; the second speaker unit **SP2** that includes the third L channel speaker **103** outputting sound to be heard in the first listening position and the fourth L channel speaker **104** outputting sound to be heard in the second listening position; the driving motors **111** to **113** and **121** to **123** that drive at least the first R channel speaker **101** such that the current first listening position is practically included in the vertical bisector plane of the line connecting the intersection of the first R channel speaker **101** and the directivity axis of the first R channel speaker **101** and the intersection of the second R channel speaker **102** and the directivity axis of the second R channel speaker **102**, and that drive at least the fourth L channel speaker **104** such that the current second listening position is practically included in the vertical bisector plane of the line connecting the intersection of the third L channel speaker **103** and the directivity axis of the third L channel speaker **103** and the intersection of the fourth L channel speaker **104** and the directivity axis of the fourth L channel speaker **104**; and the motor driver section **130** that drives the driving motors **111** to **113** and **121** to **123**. With this configuration, even if the location of the listener moves back and forth, right and left or up and down, the speaker system **100** is able to automatically adjust at least such as directions of the speakers **101** to **104** to be suitable for the current listening position. By this means, it is possible to realize a speaker system that is able to provide a listening environment which does not give a sense of discomfort to a plurality of listeners. That is, in an environment in which there are two listeners in the passenger compartment of the vehicle, it is possible to produce excellent effects at the same time that (1) the sound image is fixed in the front, (2) wide stereo sound can be provided and (3) sound of the R channel and sound of the L channel arrive at the same time, for the two listeners, so that an optimal acoustic environment can be realized.

[0118] Further, with the present embodiment, the direction of the null plane in which silence is generated in theory is adjusted using the angle of elevation difference between the first R channel speaker **101** and the second R channel speaker **102** and the angle of elevation difference between the third L channel speaker **103** and the fourth L channel speaker **104**, so that it is possible to fixedly install the second R channel speaker **102** and the third L channel speaker **103** and produce an effect of changing the direction of the null plane at lower cost.

(Embodiment 2)

[0119] An example has been described with Embodiment 1 where the shift in the null plane in which silence is generated in theory is adjusted using the "differences of angles of elevations" between speakers. With the present embodiment, the shift in the null plane is adjusted by "rotating" the entire speaker unit. Further, more precise adjustment is possible by adjusting the shift in the null plane by "rotating" the entire speaker unit.

[0120] FIG.19 is a schematic view showing from above a speaker system **700** according to Embodiment 2 of the present invention and the interior of the vehicle mounting the speaker system **700**, and FIG.20 is a block diagram showing the speaker system **700** shown in FIG.19 and configurations around the speaker system **700**. Upon description of the present embodiment, the same parts as in FIG.1 and FIG.2 will be assigned the same reference numerals and repetition of description will be omitted.

[0121] In FIG.19 and FIG.20, the speaker system **700** has: a motor driver section **730** that drives driving motors **111**, **121**, **714** and **724** for changing opening angles, driving motors **712** and **722** for changing rotation of the speaker units **SP** and driving motors **113** and **123** for changing angles of elevations of speaker units **SP**; and a sound processing section **141** that carries out signal processing of a 2-channel (i.e. L channel and R channel) signal from a sound input section **140** to which the sound source composed of the 2-channel signal is inputted and generates the in-phase signal (R), the reverse phase signal (R), the in-phase signal (L) and the reverse phase signal (L) as described above.

[0122] In FIG.20, for the speaker system **700**, in the vehicle, a controlling section **750** that controls, for example,

opening angles according to listening positions of a plurality of listeners and a position detecting section **160** that detects the location of the head of the listener sitting in a seat by receiving signals from contact switches **161** and **162** which detect the front-back position of the seat and the reclining angle, are provided.

[0123] The controlling section **750** is configured with a microprocessor, acquires head location information of the listener from the position detecting section **160** by executing a control program which will be described later in FIG.21, outputs to the motor driver section **730** control commands for controlling opening angles, rotations and angles of elevations of the speakers **101** to **104** and the speaker units **SP1** and **SP2** according to the current first and second positions of listeners and outputs to the sound processing section **141** control signals for controlling the output volumes and phases of output sounds from the speakers **101** to **104**. The motor driver section **730** precisely controls the amount of driving of an applicable driving motor according to the control commands and changes the current values of the opening angles, the rotations and the angles of elevations of the speakers **101** to **104** and the speaker units **SP1** and **SP2** to target values. Further, the sound processing section **141** changes the sound volumes and the phases of the output sounds from the speakers **101** to **104** according to the control signals from the controlling section **750**. The sound volumes and the phases are controlled by the sound processing section **141** to adjust the sound pressure level and a shift in phases due to changes of the opening angles of the speakers **101** to **104** and the rotations and the angles of elevations of the speaker units **SP1** and **SP2** by the driving motors.

[0124] FIG.21 is a flowchart showing automatic adjustment processing of the speaker system **700**. This flow is executed repeatedly at a predetermined timing cycle by the CPU in the controlling section **750**. The steps carrying out the same processing as in the flow shown in FIG.18 are assigned the same reference numerals. The letter "A" is assigned to the step numbers of different steps.

[0125] Further, although this flow employs an example of movement in the location of the listener **P1**, the same adjustment processing is executed for movement in the location of the listener **P2**.

[0126] The program starts following a change in the location of the listener **P1** (step **S1**), whether or not the location of the listener **P1** moved back and forth is decided in step **S11**. The movement in the location of the listener **P1** is decided by acquiring head location information of the listener from the position detecting section **160** (see FIG.20). If the location of the listener **P1** moves back and forth, the null plane is adjusted in step **S12A**. The controlling section **750** carries out an arithmetic operation for adjusting the null plane to place a null plane on the first listening position based on the amount of movement in the front-back position of the listener **P1**, converts the arithmetic operation result into control parameters and outputs the control parameters to the motor driver section **730**. The motor driver section **730** drives an applicable driving motor (driving motor **712** in this description) to reach this target value based on the control commands from the controlling section **750**. The null plane is adjusted by the "rotation" of the speaker unit **SP2**. Adjusting the null plane by the rotation is superior to the "differences of angles of elevations" adjustment for inclining the null plane using the line included in the null plane as a reference, in securing the required accuracy. Further, changing the rotation of the speaker unit **SP2** provides an effect of more precisely adjusting the difference between the right and left sound volumes.

[0127] Next, by changing the opening angle in the speaker unit **SP1** in step **S13A**, reflected sound is adjusted such that quality of sound that is reflected and reaches the listener **P1** improves. The decision criterion for this adjustment includes sound pressure, distortion and frequency characteristics. The controlling section **750** stores as a table the relationship between the location of the listener **P1** and the opening angle, at which reflected sound is heard the best for the listener **P1**, in the internal memory in advance and changes the opening angle referring to this table. Adjusting of the opening angles with the present embodiment is directed to adjusting opening angles of the first R channel speaker **101** and the second R channel speaker **102** shown in FIG.16. The motor driver section **730** adjusts the reflected sound by the driving the driving motor **111** to a predetermined amount and changing the opening angles of the first R channel speaker **101** and the second R channel speaker **102**.

[0128] Next, the flow proceeds to step **S21** by adjusting the difference between the right and left sound volumes in the location of the listener **P1** in step **S14** and adjusting the difference between the right and left sound volumes in the location of the listener **P2** in step **S15**. Although the reflected sound (Rch in this description) is adjusted by controlling the opening angle, the reflected sound (Rch) is adjusted, and so it is necessary to adjust direct sound (Lch) corresponding to the reflected sound (Rch). By changing the opening angle of the speaker unit **SP2** and the sound volume of the third L channel speaker **103**, the sound volumes of the right and left channels are adjusted to be the same for the listener **P1**. The sound volumes of the second R channel speaker **102** and/or the fourth L channel speaker **104** are adjusted such that the sound volumes of the right and left channels become the same for the listener **P2**. The controlling section **750** outputs to the sound processing section **141** control commands for controlling the output sound volumes and the phases of the output sounds of the speakers **101** to **104**. The controlling section **750** adjusts the right and left sound volumes to be the same by outputting to the sound processing section **141** control commands for changing the sound volume of the third L channel speaker **103** and changing the sound volume of the third L channel speaker **103**. With Embodiment **1**, the "rotation" of the speaker unit is not used. Therefore, for the listener **P2**, after the difference between the right and left sound volumes in the location of the listener **1** is adjusted, adjustment could be carried out only in accordance with the adjustment of the sound volumes of the speaker unit **SP1** and the third L channel speaker **103**.

However, with the present embodiment, improvement of a sound effect is further realized by applying the "rotation" used to adjust the null plane to adjust the directivity axis (the sound level and the speaker characteristics corresponding to the directivity axis) of the speaker unit **SP2**.

[0129] Processings of the above step **S11** to step **S15** are referred to as "processing **A**".

[0130] If the location of the listener **P1** did not move back and forth in the above step **S11** or after processing of the above step **S15** is carried out, whether or not the location of the listener **P1** moved right and left is decided. If the location of the listener **P1** moved to the right and left, the difference between the right and left paths is corrected in step **S22**. To be more specific, the difference between the right and left paths is adjusted by setting the phase of output sound from the first R channel speaker **101** of the speaker unit **SP1** ahead or back of the phases of output sounds of the other speakers **102** to **104**.

[0131] Next, the null plane is adjusted in step **S23A**. The method of adjustment uses the "rotation" as in the case of the above step **S12A**. In case of change to the right and left, given that the null plane significantly moves right and left compared to the case of change to the back and forth, the null plane is adjusted more easily by using the "rotation."

[0132] Next, by changing the opening angle in the speaker unit **SP1** in step **S24**, reflected sound is adjusted such that quality of sound that is reflected and reaches the listener **P1** improves. The method of adjustment is the same as in the case of the above step **S13A**.

[0133] Next, the difference between the right and left sound volumes in the location of the listener **P1** is adjusted in step **S25**, the difference between the right and left sound volumes in the location of the listener **P2** is adjusted in step **S26** and the flow proceeds to step **S31A**. The method of adjustment is the same as in the cases of the above step **S14** and step **S15**. In case of change to the right and left, similar to the case of change to the back and forth, the sound effect is further improved by using the rotation adjustment to adjust the directivity axis (the sound level and the speaker characteristics corresponding to the directivity axis) of the speaker unit **SP2** in step **S26**.

[0134] Processings of the above step **S21** to step **S26** are referred to as "processing **B**".

[0135] If the location of the listener **P1** did not move right and left in the above step **S21** or after processing of the above step **S26** is carried out, the null plane is adjusted in step **S31A**. The method of adjustment uses the "rotation" as in the case of the above step **S12A**.

[0136] Next, by changing the opening angle in the speaker unit **SP1** in step **S32**, reflected sound is adjusted such that quality of sound that is reflected and reaches the listener **P1** improves. The method of adjustment is the same as in the case of the above step **S13**.

[0137] Next, the same processings as in steps **S25** and **S26** are carried out in steps **S33** and **S34**, and this flow is finished.

[0138] Processings of the above step **S31** to step **S34** are referred to as "processing **C**".

[0139] The order to execute the above processings **A**, **B** and **C** can be switched. Further, similar to Embodiment 1, the timing to execute this flow is arbitrary, and, for example, the program may be started if the location of the listener changes more than a predetermined distance and may be executed at all time and adjustment may be carried out in real time processing.

[0140] In this way, according to the present embodiment, the speaker system **700** has a driving motor **712** for rotating the first speaker unit **SP1** and a driving motor **722** for rotating the second speaker unit **SP2**, so that, similar to Embodiment 1, even if the first and the second listening positions move back and forth, right and left or up and down, it is possible to automatically adjust the directions and outputs sounds of the speakers **101** to **104** and realize a speaker system that is able to provide to a plurality of listeners at the same time a listening environment which does not give a sense of discomfort.

[0141] Further, with the present embodiment, if the direction of the null plane in which silence is generated in theory is changed, the speakers **101** to **104** are driven, so that it is possible to more precisely adjust the null plane and the direction axes of the speakers **101** to **104** and produce an more excellent sound effect.

[0142] Further, in the above description, the first and the second listening positions are determined in advance and are located near the heads of the listeners sitting in the driver's seat and the front passenger seat. More preferably, in case where the vehicle is a car with a right-hand steering wheel, the first listening position is set near the left ear of the listener sitting in the driver's seat and the second listening position is set near the right ear of the listener sitting in the front passenger seat. In case where the vehicle is a car with a left-hand steering wheel, the first listening position is set near the right ear of the listener sitting in the driver's seat and the second listening position is set near the left ear of the listener sitting in the front passenger seat.

[0143] The above description is an illustration of a preferred embodiment of the present invention and the scope of the present invention is not limited to this.

[0144] Further, although examples have been described with the above embodiments where the present invention is applied to a speaker system arranged on the dashboard in a vehicle, the speaker system may be mounted in other positions in the vehicle. Furthermore, the present invention is applicable to the speaker system installed in, for example, a narrow room other than in the passenger compartment.

[0145] Further, although the term "speaker system" is used with the above embodiments for ease of description, other

terms are certainly possible, including, for example, "audio system," "audio playback system," "speaker apparatus mounted in the vehicle" and "audio devices mounted in the vehicle."

[0146] Furthermore, each circuit section forming the above speaker system, for example, the type, number and connecting method of signal processing sections and position detecting sections are not limited to the above described embodiment.

[0147] The disclosure of Japanese Patent Application No.2006-194812, filed on July 14, 2006, including the specification, drawings and abstract, is incorporated herein by reference in its entirety.

Industrial Applicability

[0148] The speaker system according to the present invention is useful as a speaker system installed in the passenger compartment of the vehicle. The present invention is also applicable for use in, for example, products having a plurality of speaker units. Further, the present invention is preferable for the speaker system installed in a narrow space other than in the passenger compartment.

Claims

1. A speaker system comprising:

a first speaker unit including a first speaker outputting a sound to be heard in a first listening position and a second speaker outputting a sound to be heard in a second listening position;
a second speaker unit including a third speaker outputting a sound to be heard in the first listening position and a fourth speaker outputting a sound to be heard in the second listening position; and
a driving section configured to drive at least the first speaker such that the current first listening position is substantially included in a vertical bisector plane of a line connecting an intersection of the first speaker and an directivity axis of the first speaker and an intersection of the second speaker and an directivity axis of the second speaker, and to drive at least the fourth speaker such that the current second listening position is substantially included in a perpendicular bisector plane of a line connecting an intersection of the third speaker and an directivity axis of the third speaker and an intersection of the fourth speaker and an directivity axis of the fourth speaker.

2. The speaker system according to claim 1, wherein:

one of the first and the second speakers receives as input an in-phase signal of a sound source and the other speaker receives as input a reverse phase signal of the in-phase signal; and
one of the third and the fourth speakers receives as input an in-phase signal of a same sound source and the other speaker receives as input a reverse phase signal of the in-phase signal.

3. The speaker system according to claim 1, wherein:

the directivity axis of the first speaker is directed toward a first reflecting plane;
the directivity axis of the second speaker is directed toward the second listening position;
the directivity axis of the third speaker is directed toward the first listening position; and
the directivity axis of the fourth speaker is directed toward a second reflecting plane.

4. The speaker system according to claim 3, wherein:

a path length through which the sound outputted from the first speaker is reflected by the first reflecting plane and reaches the first listening position, and a path length through which the sound to be outputted from the third speaker reaches the first listening position, are substantially equal; and
a path length through which the sound to be outputted from the second speaker reaches the second listening position, and a path length through which the sound to be outputted from the fourth speaker is reflected by the second reflecting plane and reaches the second listening position, are substantially equal.

5. The speaker system according to claim 1, wherein:

the second and the third speakers are fixedly installed; and

the driving section drives the first speaker and the fourth speaker.

- 5 6. The speaker system according to claim 5, wherein the driving section changes a difference of angle of elevation of the first speaker with respect to the second speaker by driving the first speaker at least in a perpendicular direction or changes a difference of angle of elevation of the fourth speaker with respect to the third speaker by driving the fourth speaker at least in a perpendicular direction.
7. The speaker system according to claim 1, wherein the driving section drives the first to the fourth speakers.
- 10 8. The speaker system according to claim 7, wherein the driving section rotates the first speaker unit or the second speaker unit.

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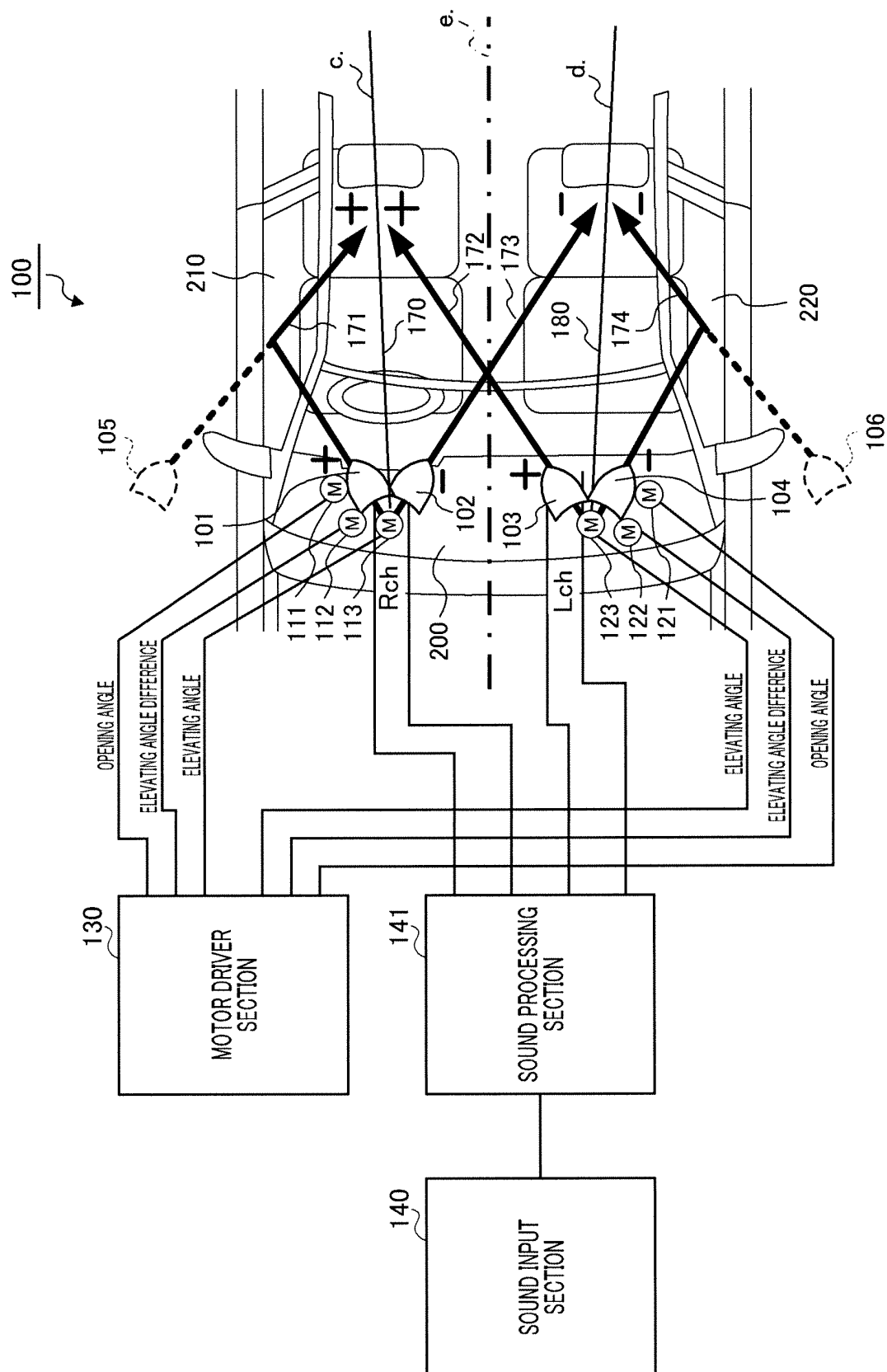


FIG.1

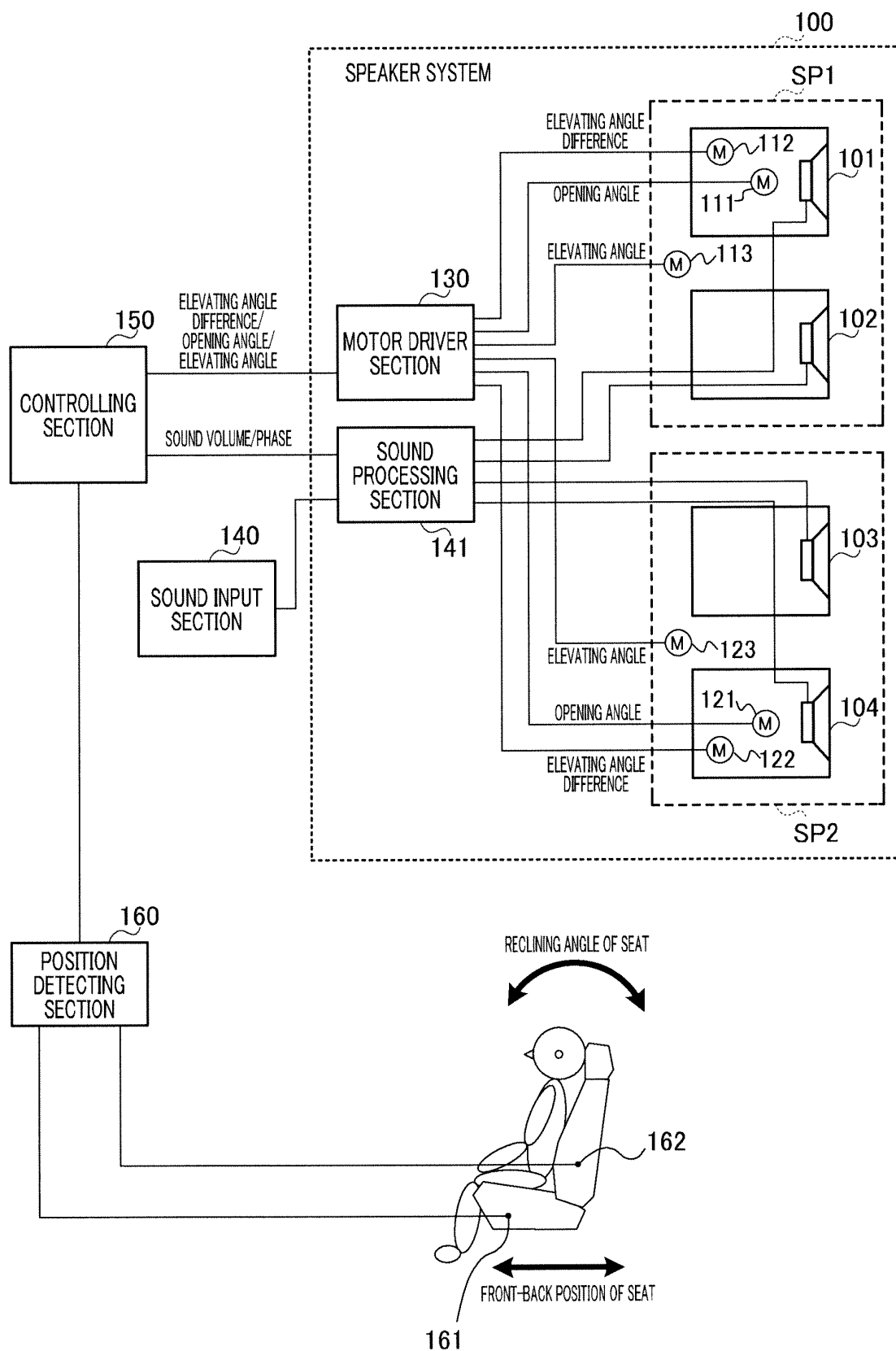


FIG.2

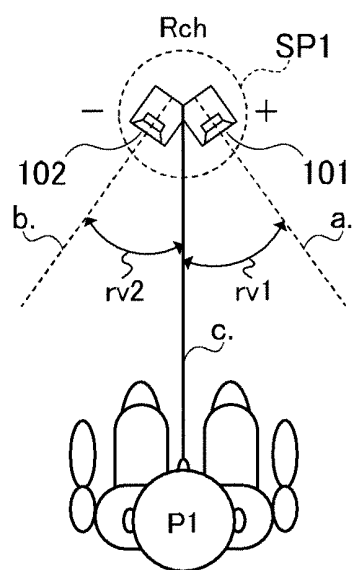


FIG. 3

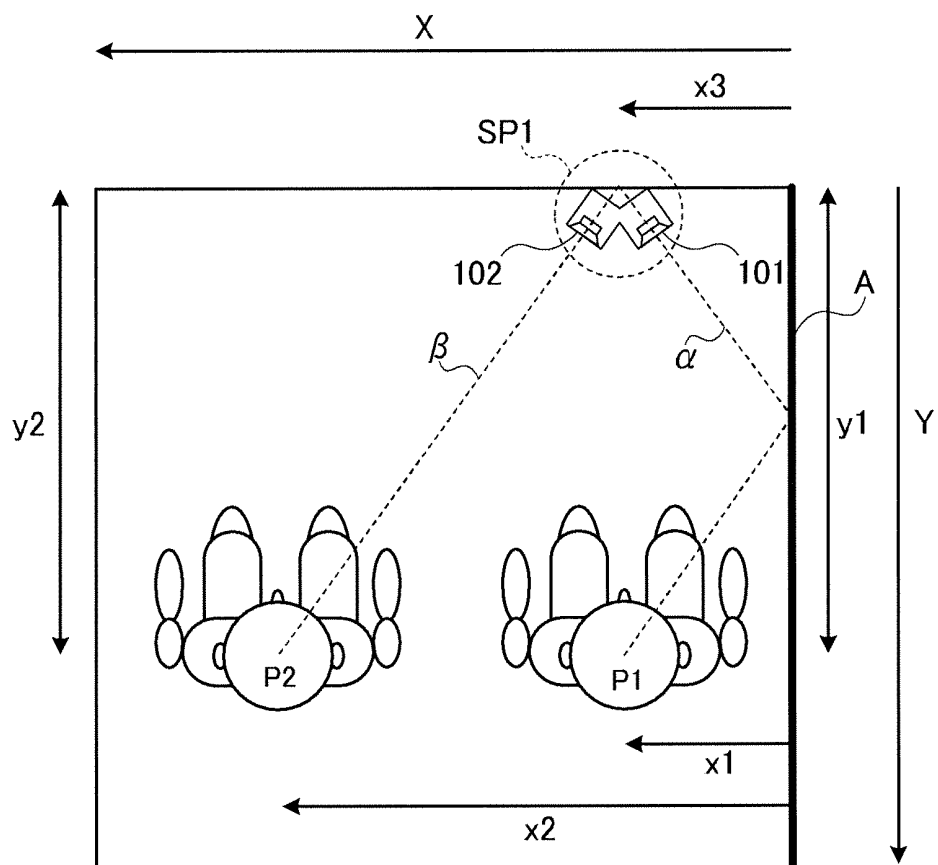


FIG. 4

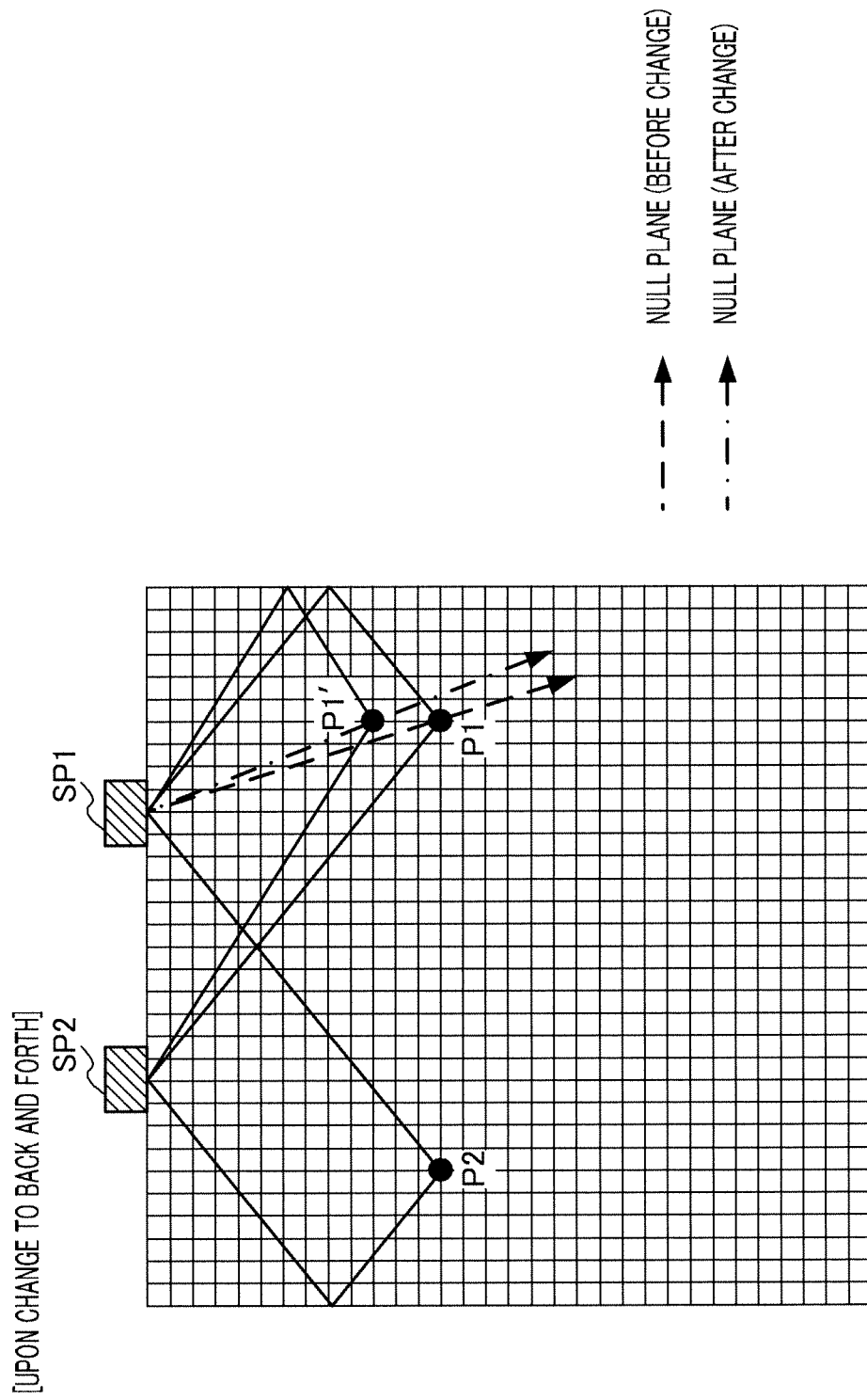


FIG.5

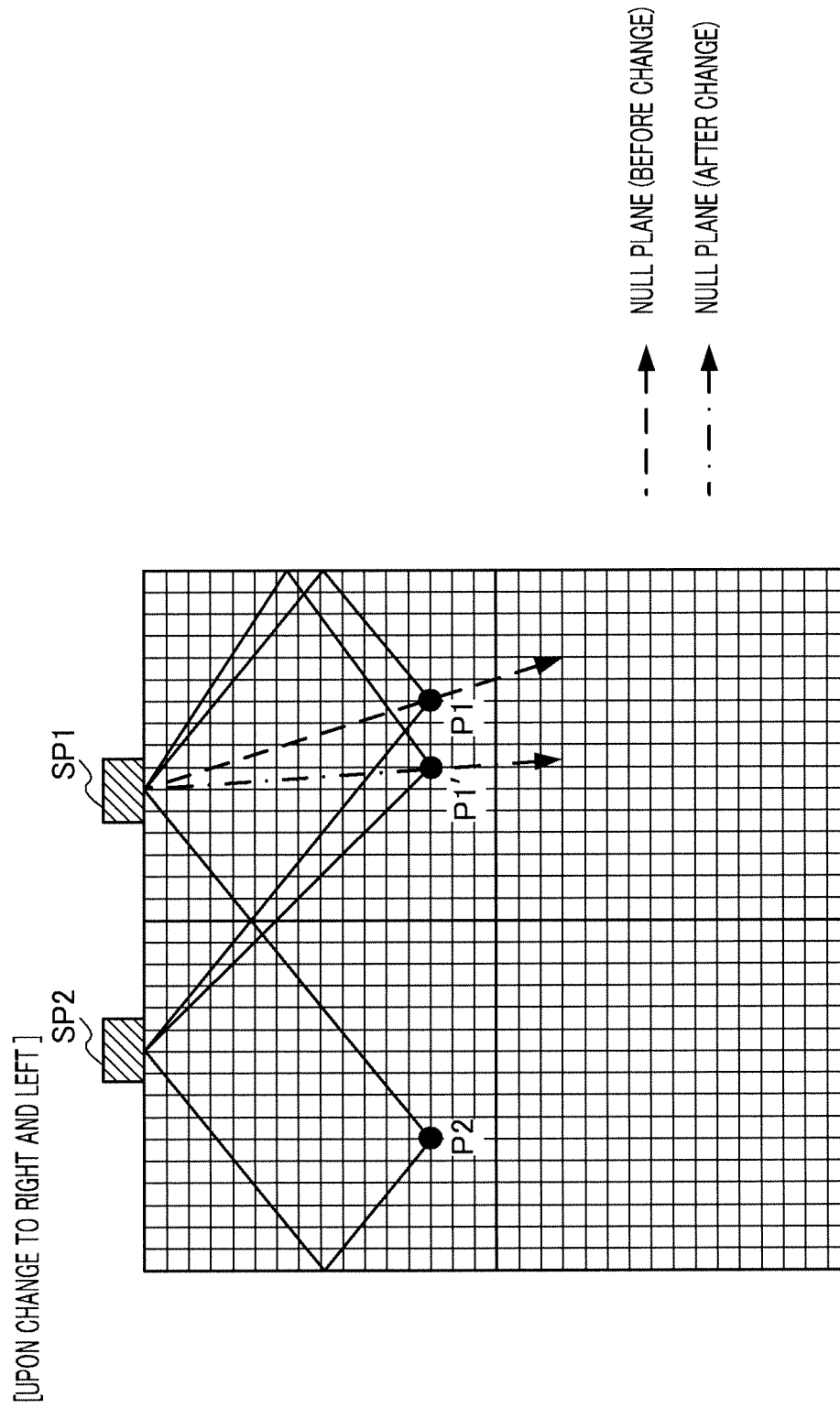


FIG.6

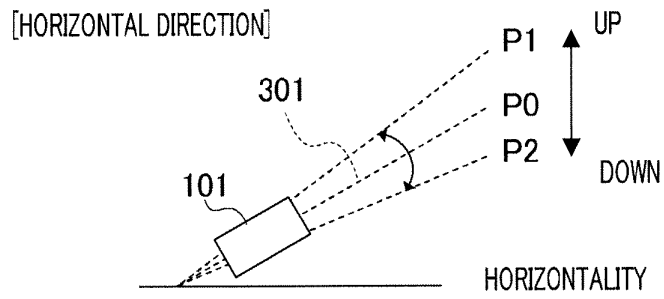


FIG. 7A

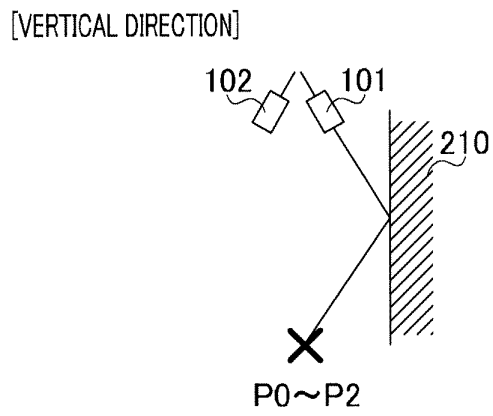


FIG. 7B

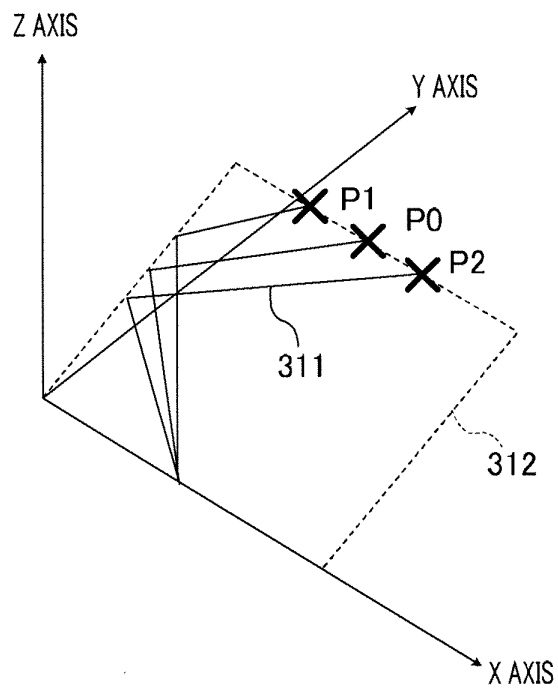


FIG. 8

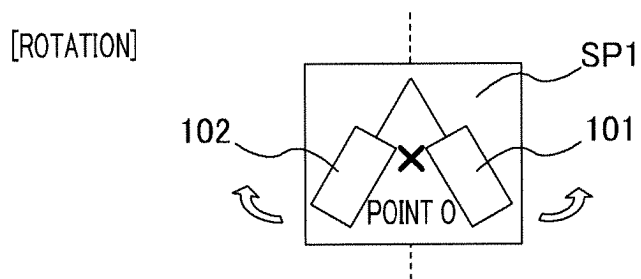


FIG. 9A

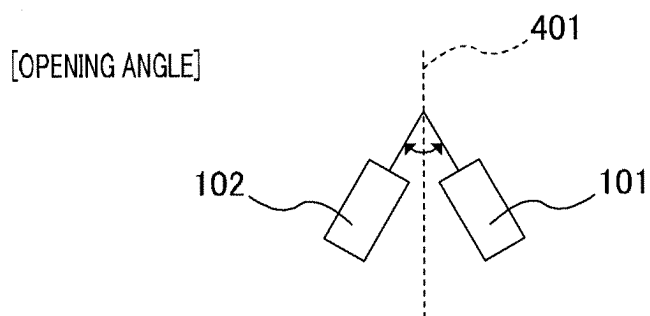


FIG. 9B

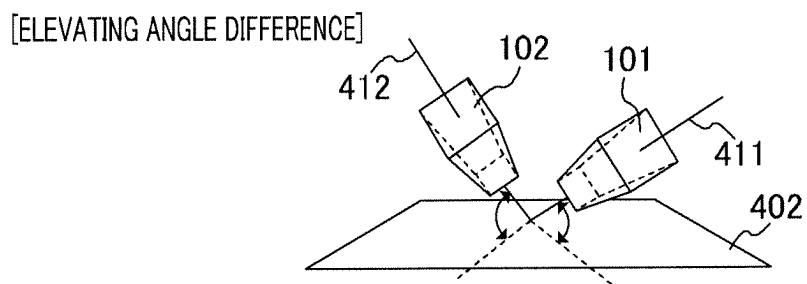


FIG. 9C

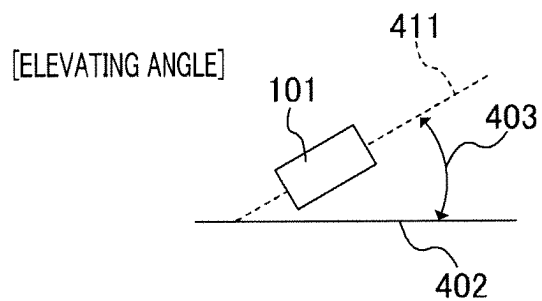


FIG. 9D

POSITION OF LISTENER	ROTATION	OPENING ANGLE	ELEVATING ANGLE
FRONT	TO LEFT	WIDEN	WIDEN
BACK	TO RIGHT	NARROW	NARROW
UP	NO CHANGE	NO CHANGE	WIDEN
DOWN	NO CHANGE	NO CHANGE	NARROW
LEFT	TO LEFT	WIDEN	NO CHANGE
RIGHT	TO RIGHT	NARROW	NO CHANGE

FIG.10

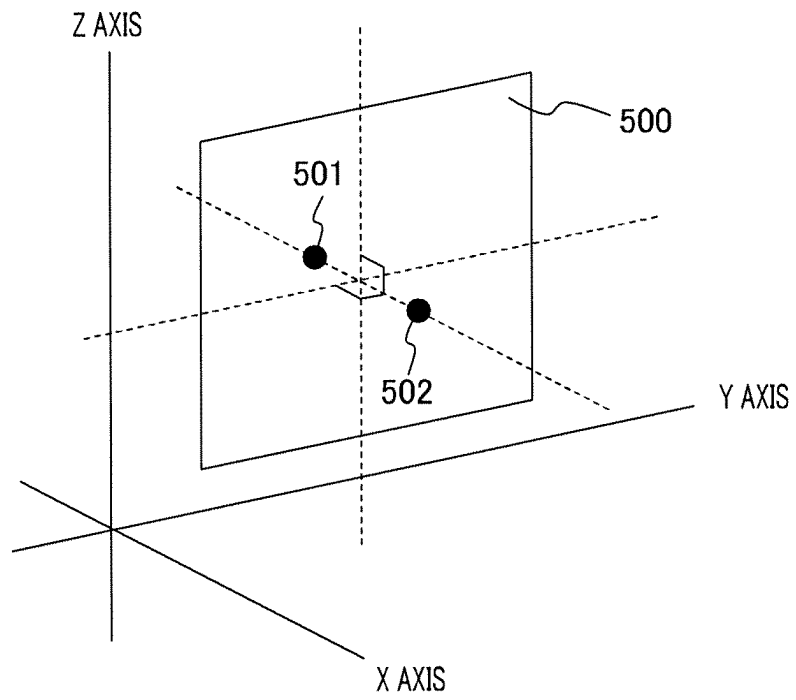


FIG. 11

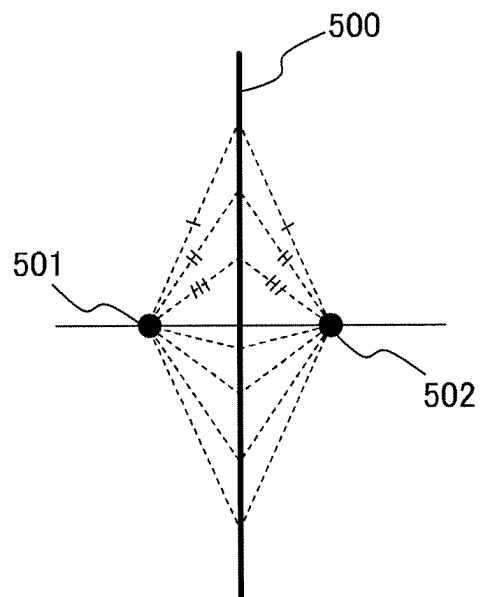


FIG. 12

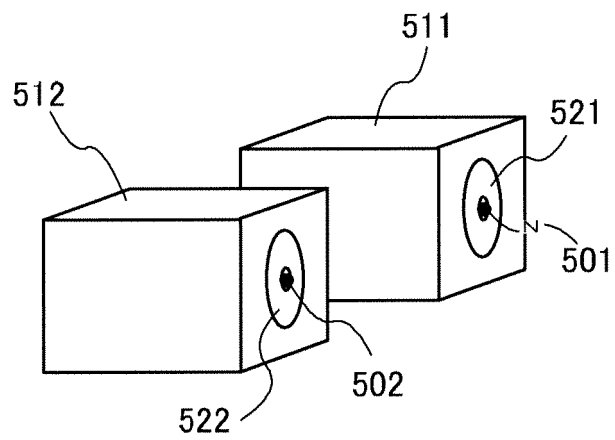


FIG.13A

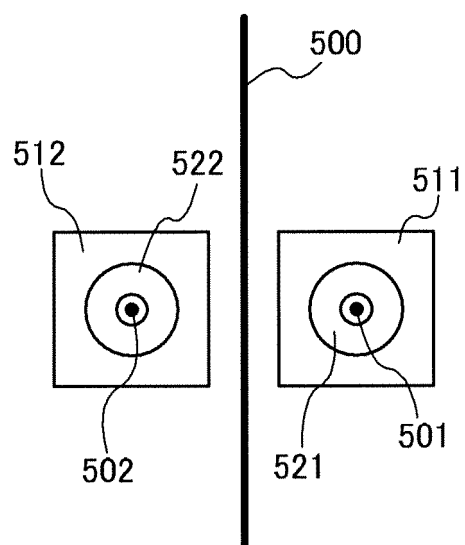


FIG.13B

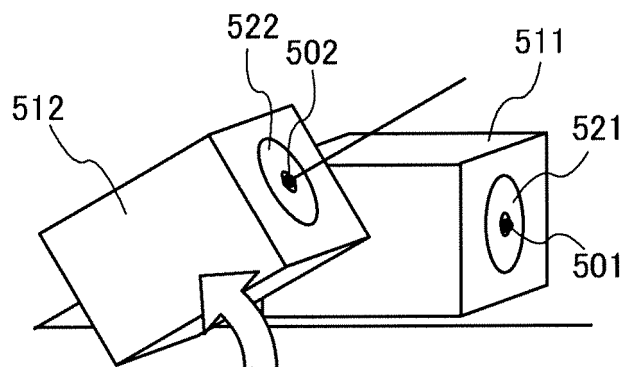


FIG. 14A

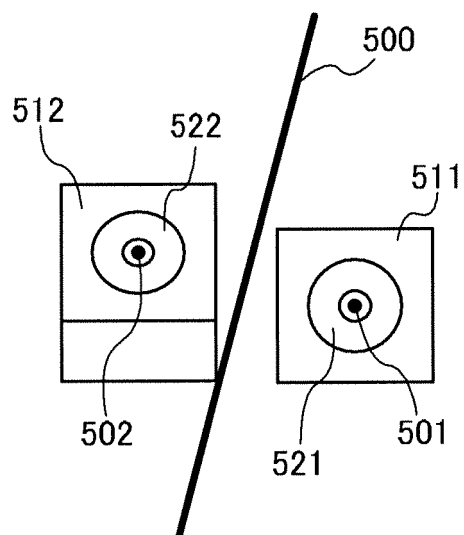


FIG. 14B

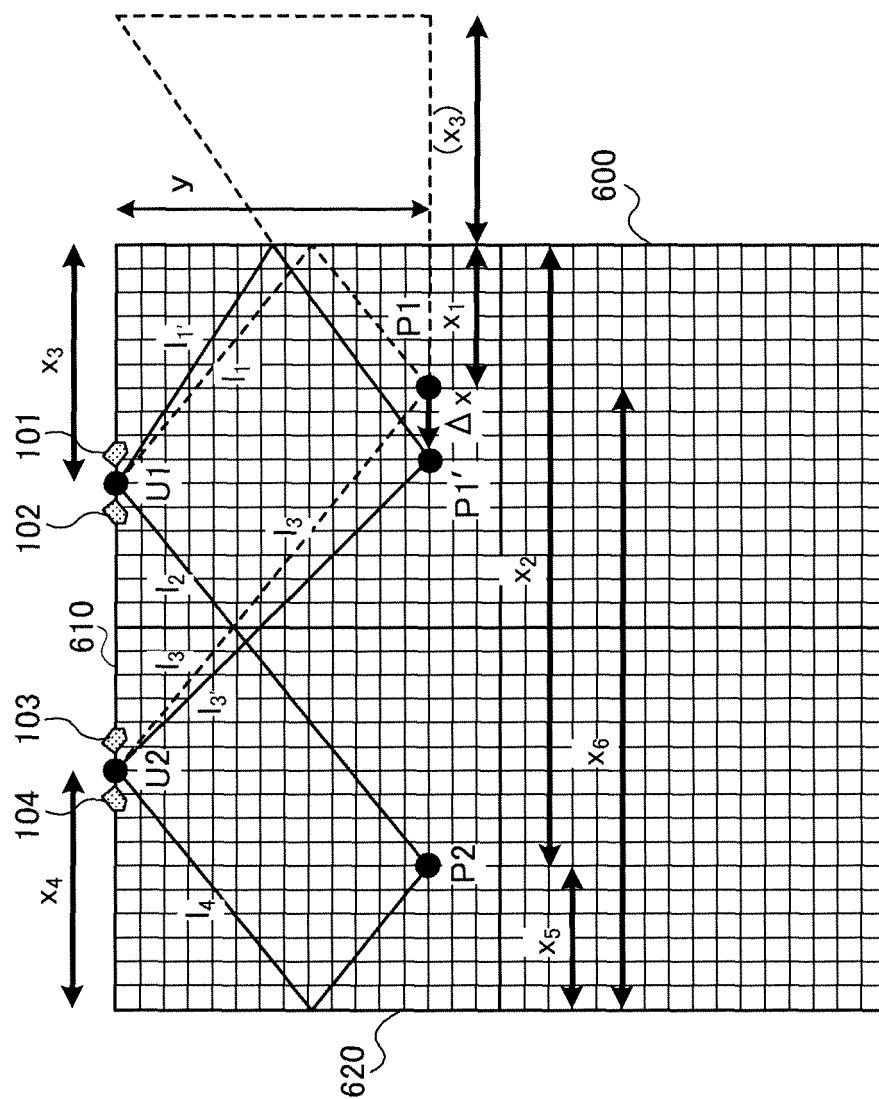


FIG.15

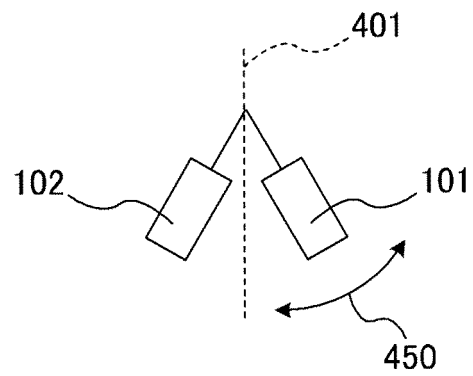


FIG. 16A

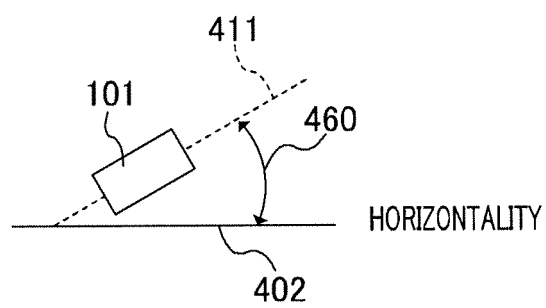


FIG. 16B

POSITION OF LISTENER	ELEVATING ANGLE DIFFERENCE			
	UPON UPWARD SHIFT ON ELEVATING ANGLE 460		UPON DOWNWARD SHIFT ON ELEVATING ANGLE 460	
	DRIVER' S SEAT	FRONT PASSENGER SEAT	DRIVER' S SEAT	FRONT PASSENGER SEAT
FRONT	NEGATIVE	POSITIVE	POSITIVE	NEGATIVE
BACK	POSITIVE	NEGATIVE	NEGATIVE	POSITIVE
UP	NO CHANGE	NO CHANGE	NO CHANGE	NO CHANGE
DOWN	NO CHANGE	NO CHANGE	NO CHANGE	NO CHANGE
LEFT	POSITIVE	POSITIVE	NEGATIVE	NEGATIVE
RIGHT	NEGATIVE	NEGATIVE	POSITIVE	POSITIVE

FIG.17

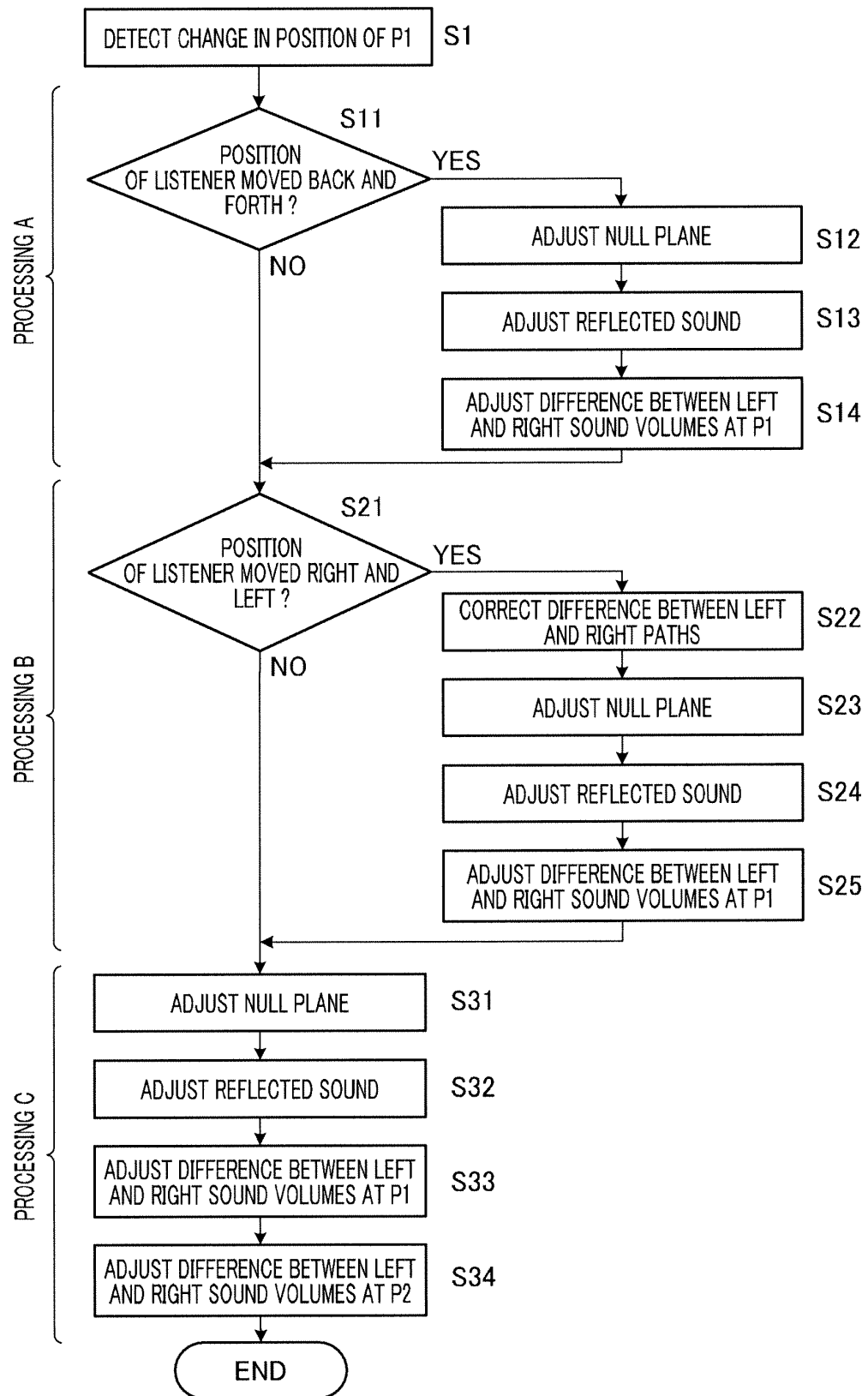


FIG.18

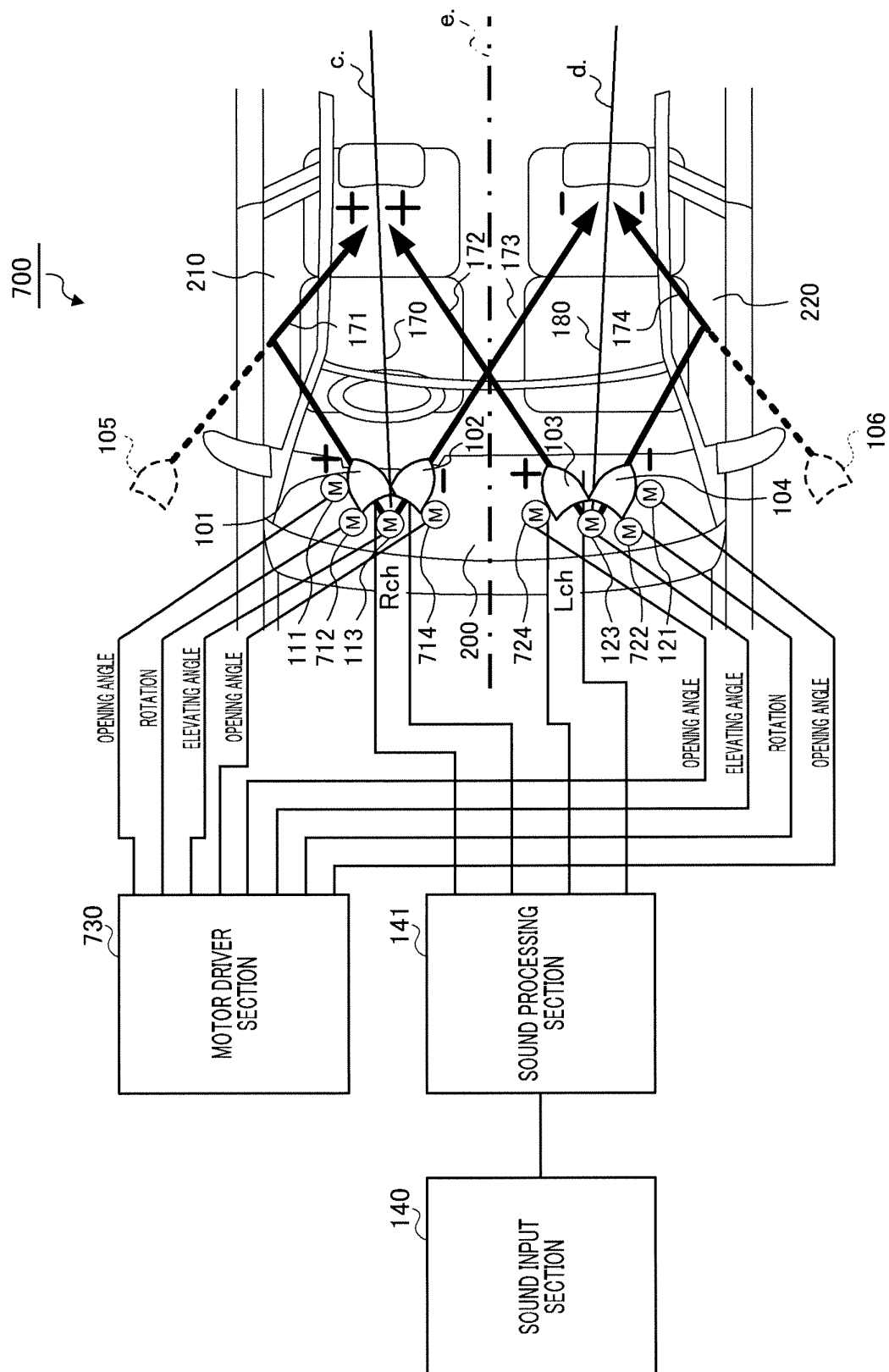
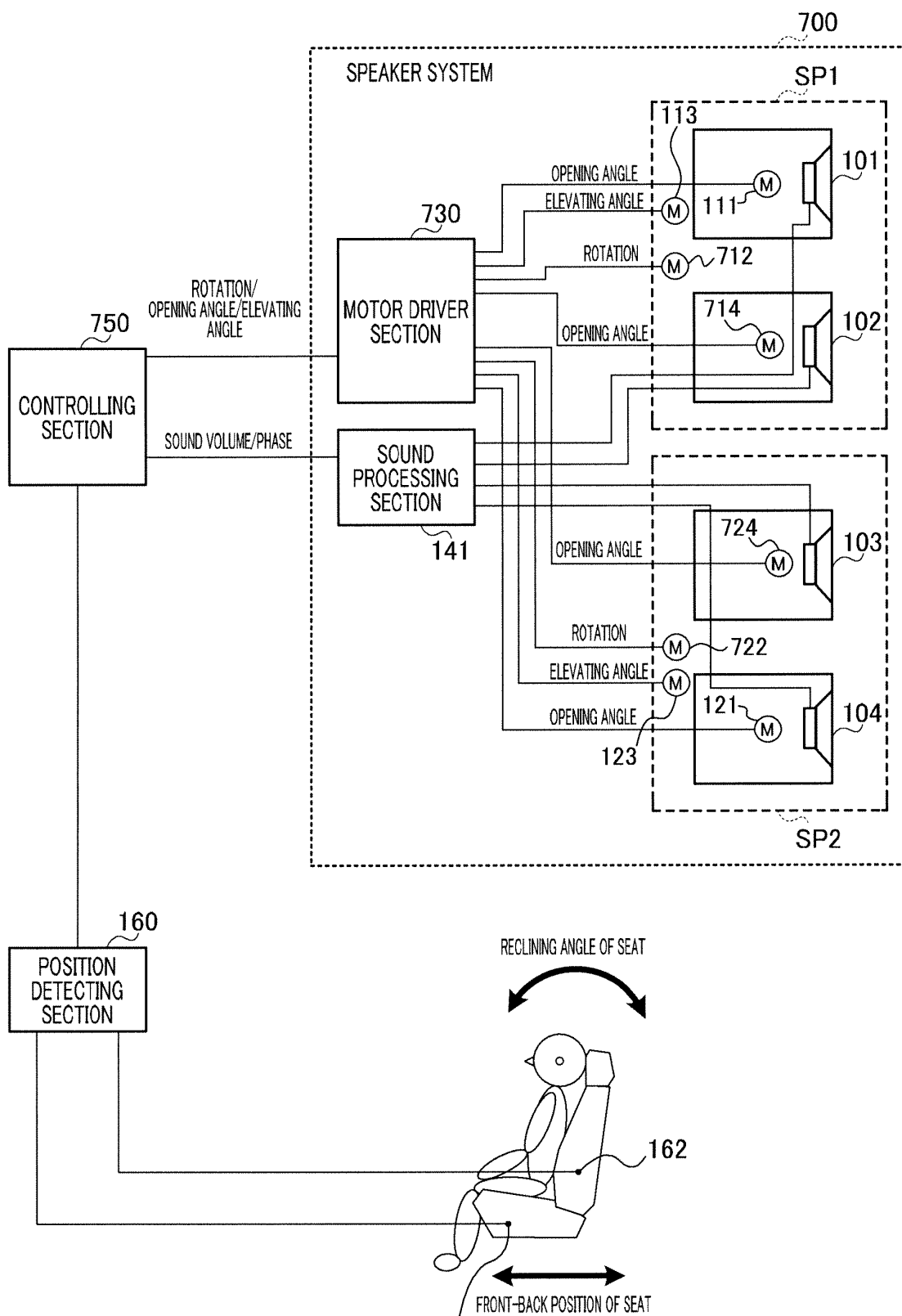


FIG. 19



161
FIG.20

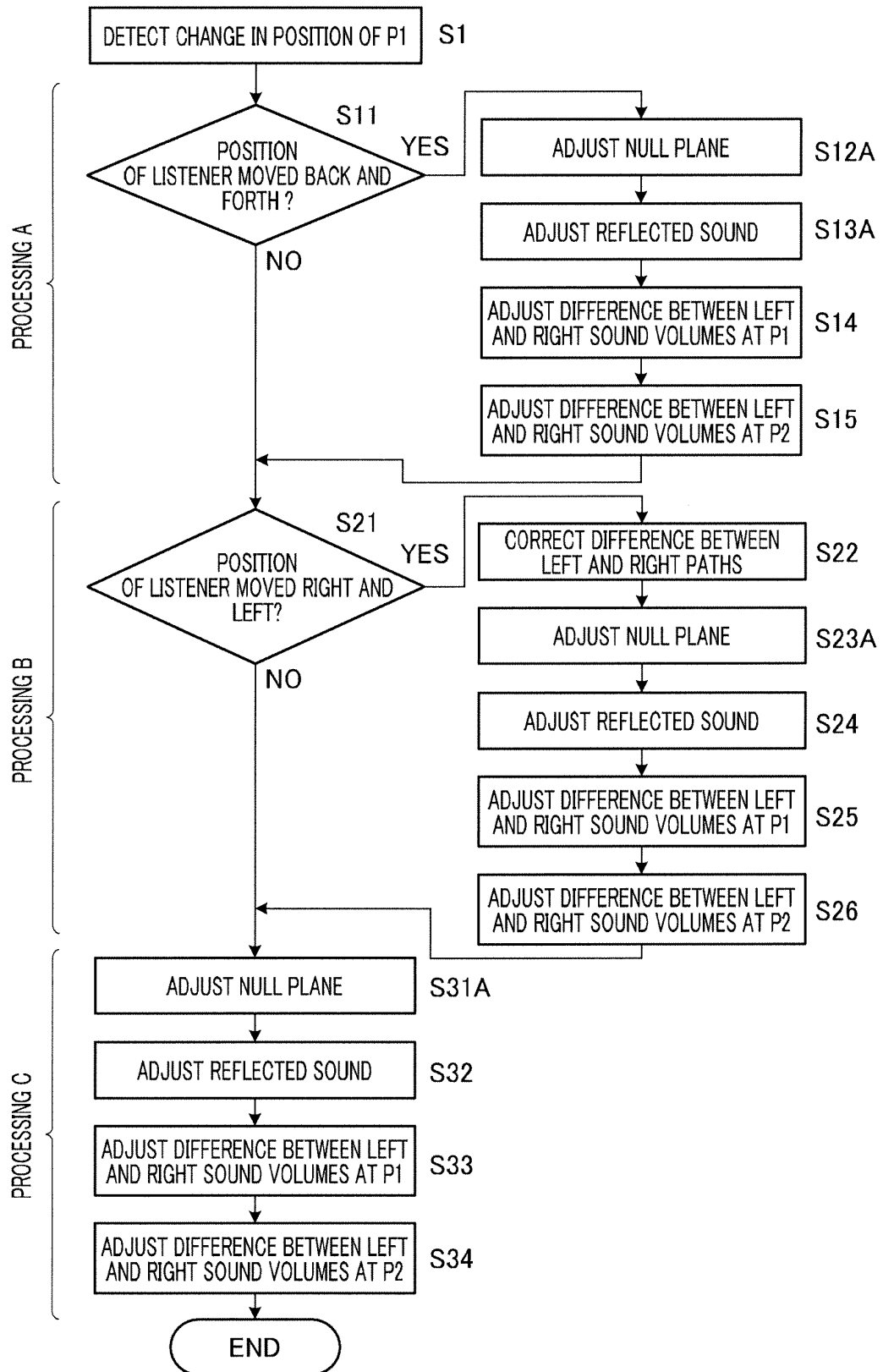


FIG.21

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.

PCT/JP2007/060827

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

H04S1/00(2006.01)i, B60R11/02(2006.01)i, H04R1/32(2006.01)i, H04R5/02(2006.01)i

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

H04S1/00, B60R11/02, H04R1/32, H04R5/02

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Jitsuyo Shinan Koho 1922-1996 Jitsuyo Shinan Toroku Koho 1996-2007

Kokai Jitsuyo Shinan Koho 1971-2007 Toroku Jitsuyo Shinan Koho 1994-2007

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used)

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
Y	JP 6-72253 A (Kenwood Corp.), 15 March, 1994 (15.03.94), Par. Nos. [0022] to [0034]; Fig. 1 & US 5389867 A & DE 4300366 A1	1, 2
Y	JP 2001-298787 A (Mitsubishi Electric Corp.), 26 October, 2001 (26.10.01), Par. Nos. [0044] to [0051] (Family: none)	1, 2
A	JP 63-26197 A (Nippon Telegraph And Telephone Corp.), 03 February, 1988 (03.02.88), All pages; all drawings & US 4764960 A & DE 3723409 A1 & FR 2601839 A & CA 1275054 A & KR 9004668 B	1, 2



Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C.



See patent family annex.

* Special categories of cited documents:

"A" document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance

"E" earlier application or patent but published on or after the international filing date

"L" document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified)

"O" document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means

"P" document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed

"T" later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention

"X" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone

"Y" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art

"&" document member of the same patent family

Date of the actual completion of the international search

30 August, 2007 (30.08.07)

Date of mailing of the international search report

11 September, 2007 (11.09.07)

Name and mailing address of the ISA/

Japanese Patent Office

Authorized officer

Facsimile No.

Telephone No.

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.

PCT/JP2007/060827

Box No. II Observations where certain claims were found unsearchable (Continuation of item 2 of first sheet)

This international search report has not been established in respect of certain claims under Article 17(2)(a) for the following reasons:

1. ☐ Claims Nos.:
because they relate to subject matter not required to be searched by this Authority, namely:

2. ☐ Claims Nos.:
because they relate to parts of the international application that do not comply with the prescribed requirements to such an extent that no meaningful international search can be carried out, specifically:

3. ☐ Claims Nos.:
because they are dependent claims and are not drafted in accordance with the second and third sentences of Rule 6.4(a).

Box No. III Observations where unity of invention is lacking (Continuation of item 3 of first sheet)

This International Searching Authority found multiple inventions in this international application, as follows:

For the reasons below, this international application contains three inventions not satisfying the requirement of unity of invention.

Main Invention: Claims 1, 2

Second Invention: Claims 3, 4

Third Invention: Claims 5, 6, 7, 8

Document 1. JP 6-72253 A (Kenwood Corp.), 15 March, 1994 (15.03.94), [0022] to [0034], figure 1

Document 2. JP 2001-298787 A (Mitsubishi Electric Corp.), 26 October, 2001 (26.10.01), [0044] to [0051] (Continued to the extra sheet.)

1. ☐ As all required additional search fees were timely paid by the applicant, this international search report covers all searchable claims.
2. ☐ As all searchable claims could be searched without effort justifying an additional fee, this Authority did not invite payment of any additional fee.
3. ☐ As only some of the required additional search fees were timely paid by the applicant, this international search report covers only those claims for which fees were paid, specifically claims Nos.:

4. ☒ No required additional search fees were timely paid by the applicant. Consequently, this international search report is restricted to the invention first mentioned in the claims; it is covered by claims Nos.: 1, 2

Remark on Protest
the

- ☐ The additional search fees were accompanied by the applicant's protest and, where applicable, payment of a protest fee.
- ☐ The additional search fees were accompanied by the applicant's protest but the applicable protest fee was not paid within the time limit specified in the invitation.
- ☐ No protest accompanied the payment of additional search fees.

Continuation of Box No.III of continuation of first sheet(2)

The international search has been conducted on the assumption that the invention in claims 1, 2 is the first mentioned invention (main invention). As a result, the technical feature of claim 1 obviously does not involve any inventive step because of above documents 1, 2.

A first loudspeaker unit of claim 1 including a first loudspeaker for outputting sound listened in a first listening position and a second loudspeaker for outputting sound listened in a second listening position is disclosed as a first dipole sound source 11 of document 1 attached on the dash board 3 and to the extension of the generally central line of the front seat 5 and composed of a horn loudspeaker 11a serving as a first sound source and a horn loudspeaker 11b serving as a second sound source arranged back to back wherein the axis P1 of the directivity of the horn loudspeaker 11a is directed obliquely backward toward the outside of the vehicle, the sound radiated from the horn loudspeaker 11a is reflected from the side window 7a of the driver's seat 5 and arrives at the listening point S1 of the driver's seat 5 which is a listening position from right-hand side, and the direct sound hardly arrives at the listening point S1, and wherein the axis P2 of the directivity of the horn loudspeaker 11b is linear, directed reversely to the axis P1 of the directivity and obliquely forward inside the vehicle (leftward in Fig. 1), the sound radiated from the horn loudspeaker 11b, reflected from the front window 4 and arrives at the listening point S2 from the right-hand side. A second loudspeaker unit of claim 1 including a third loudspeaker for outputting sound listened in a first listening position and a fourth loudspeaker for outputting sound listened in the second listening position is disclosed as a second dipole sound source 12 having the same shape and function as the first dipole sound source 11 of document 1, attached on the dash board 3 and to an extension of the generally central line of the front seat 6, and composed of a horn loudspeaker 12a serving as a third sound source and a horn loudspeaker 12b serving as a fourth sound source both similar to the horn loudspeakers 11a, 11b, wherein the axis P3 of the directivity of the horn loudspeaker 12a is directed obliquely backward toward the outside opposite to that of the horn loudspeaker 11a, the sound radiated from the horn speaker 12a is reflected from the side window 8a of the front seat 6 and arrives at a listening point S2 of the front seat 6 which is a listening position from the left-hand side, the direct sound hardly arrives at the listening point S2, the axis P4 of the directivity of the horn loudspeaker 12b is linear, directed reversely to that of the axis P3 of the directivity, the sound radiated from the horn loudspeaker 12b is reflected from the front window 4 and arrives at the listening point S1 of the driver's seat 5 from the left-hand side.

Though, in the document 1, the technique that the drive section drives at least first and fourth loudspeakers as stated in claim 1 is not disclosed, a technique that a motor drive section drives motors incorporated in the left and right loudspeakers to orient the loudspeakers in the most suitable direction toward the occupants in the driver's seat and the front seat according to the positions of the occupants detected by sensors is disclosed in document 2. Since the in-vehicle acoustic device disclosed in document 1 and the vehicle-mounted loudspeaker device disclosed in document 2 are both mounted in vehicles and belong to the technical field closely related to each other, addition of the motor of document 2 to the horn loudspeaker of document 1 is easily conceived by a person skilled in the art.

Therefore, the technical feature of claim 1 cannot be "a special technical feature" (Continued to the next extra sheet.)

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.

PCT/JP2007/060827

within the meaning of PCT Rule 13.2, second sentence.

As long as claim 2 is compared with the above prior art, "the special technical feature" of the main invention is that "a positive phase signal of the sound source is inputted into one of the first and second loudspeakers, an opposite phase signal of the positive phase signal is inputted into the other loudspeaker, the positive phase signal of the same sound source is inputted into one of the third and fourth loudspeakers, and an opposite phase signal of the positive phase signal is inputted into the other loudspeaker."

As long as the claims 3, 4 (the second invention) are compared with the above prior art, the "(temporary) special technical feature" of the second invention is that "the directivity axis of the first loudspeaker is directed to the first reflective surface, the directivity axis of the second loudspeaker is directed to the second listening position, the directivity axis of the third loudspeaker is directed to the first listening position, and the directivity axis of the fourth loudspeaker is directed to the second reflective surface."

As long as the claims 5-8 (the third invention) are compared with the above prior art, the "(temporary) special technical feature" of the third invention is that "the drive section drives at least the first and fourth loudspeakers".

No technical relationship among these inventions involving one or more of the same or corresponding special technical features can be seen.

<Concerning the search object>

The passages in claim 1 that "the perpendicularly bisecting plane of a line joining the intersecting point of the first loudspeaker and its directivity axis and the intersecting point of the second loudspeaker and its directivity axis" and that "the perpendicularly bisecting plane of the line joining the intersecting point of a third loudspeaker and its directivity axis and the intersecting point of a fourth loudspeaker and its directivity axis" are not clear nor concise and do not satisfy the requirement prescribed in PCT Article 6. In considering that the first and fourth loudspeakers are driven by the drive section and the position itself of the listener is moved as disclosed in [0054], the passage does not correspond to the matter disclosed in [0032]. Therefore the description does not satisfy the requirement prescribed in PCT Article 5.

The international search has been conducted on the assumption that in consideration of the passages from [0032] to [0040], the passage in claim 1 that "the current first listening position is substantially included in the perpendicularly bisecting plane of a line joining the intersecting point of the first loudspeaker and its directivity axis and the intersecting point of the second loudspeaker and its directivity axis" includes the contrivance in [0032] that the first R-channel loudspeaker 101 and the second R-channel loudspeaker 102 are disposed generally in front of the driver, and the passage in claim 1 that "the current second listening position is substantially included in the perpendicularly bisecting plane of the line joining the intersecting point of a third loudspeaker and its directivity axis and the intersecting point of a fourth loudspeaker and its directivity axis" includes the contrivance in [0032] that the third L-channel loudspeaker 103 and the fourth L-channel loudspeaker 104 are disposed generally in front of the listener in the front seat."

REFERENCES CITED IN THE DESCRIPTION

This list of references cited by the applicant is for the reader's convenience only. It does not form part of the European patent document. Even though great care has been taken in compiling the references, errors or omissions cannot be excluded and the EPO disclaims all liability in this regard.

Patent documents cited in the description

- JP 2004289341 A [0002]
- JP 2006194812 A [0147]